



**UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL**

**Political Economies of Terror? Ancient Monarchic Israelite and Post-Colonial  
Zimbabwean political economies in dialogue towards an inclusive economic ethics**

By

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## DECLARATION

I Honoured Taruona hereby declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other university.

Signed



10 June 2019

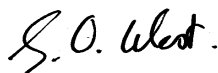
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## SUPERVISOR

As the supervisor of the above-named PhD candidate, I hereby approve this thesis for submission

Signed



10 June 2019

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Date

## **DEDICATION**

To the victims of the post-colonial Zimbabwean political economy of terror

To the dead, you did not suffer in vain

To the living, don't mourn, mobilise; don't agonise, organise

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

It is a demand of the notion of simple justice that each one be given their due. To Prof Gerald West, I cannot thank you enough for nurturing me throughout the long time that I was working with you on this project. Your vast knowledge of the subject area and giving me the room to manoeuvre will be imprinted on my mind for eternity. You pushed me out of my comfort zone and made me believe that I could do it. You are an inspiration to me. Thank you for introducing me to Marxist thought. For that I will always be grateful.

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## ABSTRACT

This work is an attempt at Marxist biblical scholarship. It seeks to add to a growing list of works from African biblical scholars that employ insights from the social sciences, Marxist analytical categories in particular, to shed light on, and better understand the social life of ancient Israel. It uses Marxist analysis to facilitate a dialogue between the political economy of ancient monarchic Israel and that of post-colonial Zimbabwe, with a view to an inclusive economic ethics.

A Marxist reading of social life in ancient monarchic Israel reveals a class divided society in which the upper classes seized the institution of the state to further their own class interests. A picture that emerges from that society is of a tiny elite parasitically living off the sweat and toil of the peasants. Physically devastated by *corvée* labour, impoverished by onerous tribute and taxation, and having lost property and family to debt instruments, the hardworking peasants rue the day their ancestors accepted the tributary state, with its monopoly of the legitimate use of violence and ideo-theologies that support and legitimate the status quo; that support and legitimate the luxury that they see being displayed wantonly by their rulers.

Like the sons and daughters of Israel they read about daily in their bibles, without stopping for a moment to reflect on their social life, the peaceful hardworking Zimbabwean masses, decimated by poverty, fear and state-sponsored brutality, yet unable to change their story, unwilling to mobilise and stage a citizen's revolution, have resigned to fate, hoping that the God of the Hebrews will listen to their cries and avenge their blood, sweat and tears. From the highs of the defeat of white racist supremacy to the lows of recording the second highest rate of inflation in recorded history, from being the second most advanced economy on the continent south of the Sahara, to rank among the poorest on earth, from its citizens being proud white collar employees, to beggars and vendors on the streets of neighbouring countries, yet their rulers and patronage networks unashamedly display their extortionate wealth in broad day light, no one in their wildest imagination would have thought that just two decades into independence, the country would descend into a predatory and brutal police state in which its leaders would join hands with the military to terrorise any form of dissent, torture tens of thousands, murder thousands of their own people who hold a different opinion from theirs, as the country tethered on the brink of becoming a failed state. Regarded as a pariah by the international community, industry having been decimated by hyperinflation and

shortage of foreign exchange, the country would be abandoned by more than half of its skilled workforce, but only after the ruling politico-military elite and its patronage networks had looted the state coffers empty. With social services having virtually collapsed, citizens would die of avoidable diseases such as cholera. The picture that emerges from Zimbabwe is of a defeated and confused citizenry, scratching their hands trying, but failing, to get answers to what has led them to be in this sorry state.

Although separated by millennia, a Marxist reading of the two political economies shows striking similarities in terms of stratification, primitive accumulation of wealth by the upper classes and their apparent insensitivity to the plight of the masses. A biblically-inspired economic ethics that extols community and advocates an option for those who have fallen on the wrong side of the political economy is what the exploited in both contexts want to hear.

## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AAG	Affirmative Action Group
AFC	Agricultural Finance Corporation
AfDB	African Development Bank
AHT	Air Harbour Technologies
AIPPA	Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act
AU	African Union
BACOSSI	Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention
BCE	Before the Common Era
CCJP	Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace
CCZ	Consumer Council of Zimbabwe
CFU	Commercial Farmers' Union
CIO	Central Intelligence Organisation
CZI	Chamber of Zimbabwean Industry
DRC	Democratic Republic of the Congo
ESAP	Economic Structural Adjustment Programme
EEC	European Economic Commission
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTLRP	Fast Track Land Reform Programme
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GNP	Gross National Product
GNU	Government of National Unity
HRW	Human Rights Watch
HSF	Helen Suzman Foundation
IBDC	Indigenous Business Development Centre
ICC	International Criminal Court
ICG	International Crisis Group
ICT	Information Communication and Technology
IMF	International Monetary Fund
JOC	Joint Operations Command
KP	Kimberley Process

LHA	Lancaster House Agreement
LOMA	Law and Order (Maintenance) Act
LRC	Legal Resources Centre
LS	<i>Laudato si'</i>
MDC	Movement for Democratic Change
NCA	National Constitutional Assembly
NECI	National Economic Conduct Inspectorate
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NOCZIM	National Oil Company of Zimbabwe
NRZ	National Railways of Zimbabwe
ODA	British Overseas Development Administration
OAU	Organisation of African Unity
PAC	Partnership Africa Canada
PF ZAPU	Zimbabwe African People's Union - Patriotic Front
POSA	Public Order and Security Act
PWR	Parliament of World Religions
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SADCC	Southern African Development Coordinating Conference
SAIIA	South African Institute of International Affairs
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
SDM	Single Member District
SEPs	State enterprises and parastatals
SOEs	State-owned enterprises
SPT	Solidarity Peace Trust
TNCs	Transnational corporations
TTLs	Tribal Trust Lands
UDI	Unilateral Declaration of Independence
UN	United Nations
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
US	United State of America



USCCB	United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
WB	World Bank
WHO	World Health Organisation
WVCF	War Victims Compensation Fund
ZADHR	Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights
ZANU PF	Zimbabwe African National Union - Patriotic Front
ZBC	Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation
ZCTU	Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions
ZDF	Zimbabwe Defence Forces
ZDI	Zimbabwe Defence Industries
ZESN	Zimbabwe Election Support Network
ZHRC	Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission
ZIMCORD	Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development
ZISCO	Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company
ZNCC	Zimbabwean National Chamber of Commerce
ZRP	Zimbabwe Republic Police
ZSE	Zimbabwe Stock Exchange
ZUM	Zimbabwe Unity Movement

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# CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

## *1.1 Background and motivation*

On 18 April 1980, Zimbabwe was born amid much pomp and fanfare after a revolution that ended white minority settler colonialism. The second most industrialised economy in Africa, south of the Sahara, with probably the most educated citizens in the region, was surely poised for massive economic growth that would result in the upliftment of the majority of its citizens from poverty. The newly-born nation was expected to become a beacon of hope and a breath of fresh air on a continent where poverty, civil conflicts and dictatorships reigned supreme. For those of a socialist persuasion, the second phase of the democratic revolution, namely to launch a socialist democratic state with the workers and the peasants as the vanguard and motive forces of the revolution, was almost inevitable. On it were pinned the hopes of the southern African region. Why not when the Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF), the party that had won the first democratic election resoundingly, had since 1977 invoked Marxist-Leninist ideology. Unfortunately, the petite bourgeoisie that came to power had other ideas. In spite of its rhetoric, the revolution did not encompass a socialist revolution. It became obvious right from the Lancaster House Conference that no socialist revolution was going to take place when the African petite bourgeoisie leadership went to bed with imperialism and aggressively started courting international finance capital. It soon became clear that wealth accumulation by the African nationalist movement, mimicking their white settler precursors, was the priority, not socialist revolution. The socialist revolution ran aground.

The African nationalist petite bourgeoisie leadership steered the nation towards full-blown capitalism, which culminated in the adoption of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP). The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank (WB) sponsored programme was an absolute disaster for the economy. It exacerbated underdevelopment and increased poverty. The net effect of ESAP was a general crisis of legitimacy followed by an increasingly militant citizenry. The working class together with various social movements developed class consciousness and coalesced around the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) to take collective political action to bring about socio-political and economic change. Sensing defeat, ZANU PF resurrected its liberation war

tactics to unleash untold violence on opposition members, supporters and sympathisers. The anti-developmental parasitic ruling elite had turned into a leviathan, feasting on its citizens.

Nobody would have imagined that only twenty years into independence, the land would be in a sorry state, ravaged by poverty, easily avoidable diseases, mass unemployment, runaway inflation and a predatory state that would terrorise, torture, maim and kill its own citizens. As if that was not enough, the power elites and their patronage networks would suck the government coffers dry, becoming extremely wealthy in the process. Opposition political parties, private media and human rights organisations would allege massive electoral irregularities; the torture, murder and displacement of thousands of opposition supporters. The picture that would emerge from the tiny southern African country was that of an impoverished citizenry totally scared of its leadership. This seems to have the hallmarks of a political economy of terror.

The same situation seemed to obtain in ancient monarchic Israel. The transition from a loose tribal organisation to a monarchic state in ancient Israel resulted in a reconfiguring of social relations and ownership of the means of production. The traditional tribal norms of mutual aid among kinsmen were thrown out of the window as the privileged elite sucked the surpluses from the peasants to sustain a privileged lifestyle for themselves and their patronage networks. Class became more important than kinship relations. Through debt slavery, the peasants lost their property and even their very selves and became slaves, toiling not for themselves, but for the heartless landowners and money lenders. A tiny fraction of the population that was not at all involved in production controlled virtually all the wealth in ancient Israel while the real producers were strangled by economies of extraction. This does look like a political economy of terror.

By “political economy of terror” in this work is meant one in which a tiny minority elite has seized the means of production, and it is this minority that determines what is produced, by whom, for whom and who gets what share of it. It is one in which the hardworking majority are deprived of the fruits of their labour and are wallowing in abject poverty while the elite live in conspicuous consumption. It is characterised by an elite that is indifferent to the plight of the masses. It is characterised by a paradox: it is the best of times for the minority and the worst of times for the majority. In a political economy of terror, the ruling elite that enjoy



state power use the state to serve their own accumulation interests and can easily use state power to repress the masses to carry out their will. It is a situation in which the impoverished majority are scared of their rulers. It is these factors that will form the bedrock of our analysis of the two political economies.

Using Marxist economic analysis, this work argues that in spite of the numerous differences between ancient polities such as ancient Israel and modern capitalist states such as post-colonial Zimbabwe, there are enough parallels to warrant a serious cross-cultural comparative study between the two contexts. For example, both polities are characterised by forms of extraction of resources by the ruling and upper classes at the expense of the lower classes. By their very nature, centralised polities survive on extraction from the proceeds of the sweat of the citizenry. Marxists argue that the state is a site of accumulation by the ruling and upper classes. The struggle for control of the state is a struggle for control of resources. Whoever controls the state automatically controls its resources. Furthermore, the two are also comparable because of the constant class struggles between the two classes which are evident in both political economies. From a dialogue between these two political economies, we are able to construct an inclusive economic ethics informed by biblical principles. However, the economic ethics is not so much a blueprint but is rather a motivation and vision for economic transformation.

The state features prominently in this work. This has been necessitated by the fact that the political economies are political economies of a “state.” And the nature of the political economy is determined by the nature of the state. As Bob Jessop (2012:5) argues, the state is central to Marxist analyses - not only with regards to political power in narrow terms but also to class power more generally - because the state is seen as responsible for maintaining the overall structural integration and social cohesion of a “society divided into classes,” such as ancient monarchic Israel and post-colonial Zimbabwe. However, biblical scholars have largely shied away from a detailed analysis of the “state” as a form of socio-political organisation. Christa Schaefer-Lichtenberger (1996) has done some scientific analysis of the state. So has Norman K. Gottwald (2001). But by-and-large, the “state” *qua* state has not been of interest to biblical scholars. It is taken for granted that ancient monarchic Israel was a “state” among other Near Eastern “states”. This work seeks to add to this limited list of works from biblical scholars that detail the so-called ancient Near Eastern “state.”

This work goes beyond a mere economic analysis of ancient monarchic Israel and post-colonial Zimbabwe which would be confined to a narrow framework of economic science. Economics relies on the limited concepts of agents of economic change which are limited to the abstract categories of the entrepreneur, the consumer and at times the state but only as it relates to the economic functions of the state, e.g. regulation or legislation (Mentan 2010:xvi). It is not enough simply to ask how the economy is doing, how much Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) is coming in and by how much the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is growing. That does not go far enough. Political economy, on the contrary, looks farther and wider. It analyses the role of class and power relationships with regards to ownership and allocation of resources. Such political factors are crucial in determining economic outcomes. According to Gottwald (1993:18) it involves who decides what is produced and who benefits from production. These, in our view, are pertinent questions which ought to be asked in a society. While numbers of growth may not be unimportant, political economy probes issues of the ownership of the means of production behind those numbers and distribution of the national income and wealth. Furthermore, the economic and the political are deeply intertwined that it is more fruitful to treat them together rather than separately. Thus we speak of political economy, for the economy is unavoidably political.

## ***1.2 Research Questions***

When dealing with political economies that are separated by several millennia, one needs to be careful not to just pluck them out of their contexts and put them alongside each other. The question that immediately comes up is: is it possible for the two political economies to dialogue with each other given the obvious differences between them? Related to this is: how can Marxist analysis help to facilitate that dialogue? It is when these has been answered that the most important question can then be answered: can a dialogue between ancient monarchic Israelite and post-colonial Zimbabwean political economies contribute to an inclusive economic ethics? What are the markers of this economic ethics?

Since this research work has two parts, ancient Israel and Zimbabwe, further questions come from each of the parts. What was the nature of the political economy of monarchic Israel and how can Marxist analysis help to shed light on this political economy? To what extent can it

be labelled a political economy of terror? Some more questions will also be answered when we trace the history of the political economy of monarchic Israel. After two centuries of relative equal access to the means of production, what necessitated the community to abandon a loose socio-political organisational structure that guaranteed them freedom and opt for a state system when it was obvious that the ruling elites would oppress the peasant majority? With the emergence of the state which of course needed peasant surpluses to survive and thrive, what mechanisms were used by the ruling elite to extract peasant surpluses? With time it does seem that the new political economy had a terrible impact on the peasants who were barely making ends meet, yet still continued to pay their taxes and perform corvée labour. What is it that made them to continue to pay taxes and provide labour when they were that impoverished?

Another set of questions emanate from a discussion of “the state.” What factors led to the emergence of the pristine states in human history? In what sense can the ancient Israelite monarchy and indeed any other ancient polity be called a “state”? If ancient Israel was a “state,” could it have been a “state” in the same sense as post-colonial Zimbabwe is a “state”? In other words, how do ancient polities differ from modern states? Because of groupings or federations of states such as the African Union (AU) and European Union (EU), does the state still have a future? Is it not likely to go the way of the city-state or the empire? What is the Marxist understanding of the state, that is, its origins, role and nature?

A few questions need to be answered on post-colonial Zimbabwe. What was the nature of the political economy of that country that qualifies it to be labelled a political economy of terror? How can Marxist analysis help to shed light on this political economy? What mechanisms did the power elites and their patronage networks use to bankrupt the state and enrich themselves? How is it that an economy, which was full of promise at independence in 1980, descended into such miserable depths as to rank among the poorest on earth? Was the misery of the country self-inflicted or there were other more powerful external forces involved?

### ***1.3 Objectives***

The objectives of this study are:

- To determine if the ancient monarchic Israelite and post-colonial Zimbabwean political economies can dialogue with one another, that is, if they are comparable
- To employ Marxist analysis to facilitate a dialogue between the two political economies
- To investigate the origins, nature and future of the state
- To investigate the nature of the political economy of ancient monarchic Israel and ascertain the extent to which it can be labelled a political economy of terror
- To investigate the nature of the political economy of post-colonial Zimbabwe in order to ascertain if it can be described as a political economy of terror
- To construct an inclusive economic ethics from a dialogue between ancient monarchic Israelite and post-colonial Zimbabwean political economies

### ***1.4 Theoretical framework - Marxist analysis***

This work is an attempt at Marxist biblical scholarship. The contributions of Marxist theory have been ignored and at worst dismissed on ideological grounds by Western biblical scholars, to the detriment of Western biblical studies. It is only recently that its contributions have started to be more appreciated as offering explanatory and exegetical resources to biblical scholarship (cf. West 2011; Boer 2003, 2008). Indeed Marxist analysis can provide sustainable resources for a study of monarchic Israel. Marxist biblical tools illuminate our understanding of a number of aspects of the Israelite political economy. For example, they shed light on how the Israelite pre-state tribal society came about as a result of a social revolution of the peasants against the Canaanite city-state political economies of terror. Marxist tools also help to highlight the significance of the economy in socio-political transformation. The importance of the economy in the rise of the monarchy, in the political decisions and strategies taken by successive kings and in the division of the monarchy need not be underestimated. Marxist theory's emphasis on the history of nations and societies as a

history of class struggles is also very important for this study. This enables us to understand the dynamics of the struggles.

On post-colonial Zimbabwe's political economy, Marxist theory will help shed light on the internal dynamics of that system as a constant struggle between the free market oriented ruling petite bourgeoisie and the expectant peasants. Marxist theory also helps us to see the bigger picture in some high-profile corruption cases that have been unearthed (e.g. the Willowvale scandal and the War Victims Compensation Fund [WVCF] abuse). It points towards problems associated with neo-liberalism, class rule and how the state is an instrument and a site of accumulation for the ruling class (Hattingh 2014). In other words, for the emerging elite in post-colonial Zimbabwe, the state offered the most viable way to amass private wealth, most of the times on a very large scale. Corruption is part of capitalism as a system and the system feeds and thrives on it. Corruption oils the wheels of capitalism. In fact capitalism breeds and fosters corruption which, in its turn, requires corruption to continue to exist and thrive. Thus we can begin to appreciate why the ruling African petite bourgeoisie that grabbed power in 1980 spoke loudly about being socialists while embarking on policies that reinforced capitalism. Furthermore, the decision to implement the disastrous ESAP should be seen against this background. It was only in a free market capitalist environment that their accumulation agenda would be realised.

The Marxist categories of mode of production, class and ideology will be useful in better understanding the ancient Israelite and post-colonial Zimbabwean political economies.

#### **1.4.1 Mode of production**

According to Roland Boer (2002:108), mode of production is the ultimate category for any Marxist criticism. David Jobling (2005:192) adds that the greatest theoretical debt which biblical studies owes to Marxism is the understanding of historical modes of production. Maurice Godelier (1980:6) defines mode of production as

a specific combination of determinate productive *forces* and of determinate *social relations* constituting both material and social conditions, and the internal material and social structures through which society acts upon its natural environment in order to extract from it a series of socially useful goods (emphasis added).

In this general sense, mode of production refers to the whole reality of a particular historical era that includes culture, economics, ideology, class, politics, philosophy, religion, law etc. (Boer 2002:108). In this sense, a mode of production is a particular combination of the forces and relations of production that determine the structure and form of a society's economic base (Simkins 1999:126). The reference of the concept mode of production thus ranges from the specifics of the tools and processes employed in production, to the area of final consumption, posing the questions about what is produced, how it is produced, and by and for whom? (Maisels 1990:262).

Over and above the means for making a living, mode of production also includes the *relationships* involved: who owns the means, how is production organised, who controls the product and how is it distributed, and who consumes what part of it? (Leacock and Lee 1982:7). Relations of production, according to Jessop (2012:5-6),

comprise social control over the allocation of resources to different productive activities and over the appropriation of any resulting surplus; the social division of labour...; and class relations grounded in property relations, ownership of the means of production, and the form of economic exploitation.

Godelier (1980:6) simplifies it, defining relations of production as

all social relations whatsoever, which serve a three-fold function: first, to determine social access to and control of resources and the means of production; second, to redistribute the social labour force among the different labour processes and to organise these processes; and third, to determine the social distribution of the product of labour.

Thus relations of production determine the economic use that is made of the means of production, the division of productive labour, the forms of appropriation and distribution of the social product, and the value of the surplus in relation to the costs of reproduction and the utilisation of the surplus (Friedman 1974:446). Forces of production comprise of three elements, namely, instruments of production, labour power and objects of labour. Instruments of production refers to the actual labour process of how work is done, that is, tools, facilities, apparatus etc. Forces of production determine the possibilities and the constraints of the productive process, but the specific patterns of allocation and stratification are determined by

the social relations of production (Godelier 1977:36). While the role of productive forces in producing social change is important, however for this work the social relations of production are crucial for they determine the choice of productive forces and their use in production.

Applying the concept of relations of production to pre-state Israel reveals that the peasants, who are the direct producers, are simultaneously the consumers. Yet in monarchic Israel, the political superstructure plays an important role in land ownership and in the expropriation of surplus value from the peasants. It decides the ownership and use of the means of production, the division of labour and the distribution of its fruits. There is now a disjuncture between producers and consumers, between production and disposition of the surplus (Maisels 1990:299). The state and economic elites, key actors in ancient Israel, have a say on what is produced, by what means, where, by and for whom.

In our view, mode of production provides the most comprehensive category for understanding the political economy of ancient Israel. Charles Keith Maisels (1990:274) argues that the value of the concept does not lie in the fact that it offers yet another list of types of systems but rather that it focuses on “a set of *systematic and analytically revealing interconnections*” (italics in original). We thus argue that the concept of mode of production may serve as an enlightening model for analysing the social structure and economy of monarchic Israel. It readily corresponds to the socio-political and economic realities of that society.

### **1.4.2 Class**

Another Marxist analytical category that is central to understanding social relations, and therefore the ancient Israelite political economy, is social class. Gideon Sjoberg (1960:109) defines a social class as

a large body of persons who occupy a position in a social hierarchy by reason of their manifesting similarly valued objective criteria. These latter include kinship affiliation, power and authority, achievements, possessions, and moral and personal attributes. Achievements involve a person's occupational and educational attainments; possessions refer to material evidences of wealth; moral attributes include one's religious and ethical beliefs and actions; and personal attributes involve speech, dress and personal mannerisms.

Class is determined by the relation of people in a given society to the mode of production. The class-divided society is composed of at least two strata: an upper stratum comprising the monarch, his relatives and the aristocracy, and a lower stratum including, among others, smallholders and tenants (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:637). The former can also be called non-producers, exploiters, the dominators or the ideologically superior, while the latter are the producers, the exploited, the dominated, or the ideologically inferior. The exploiters are non-producers yet exact surplus from the exploited.

Gottwald (1993:4) notes that classes should not be viewed as strata laid down in layers, one on top of the other, but should rather be viewed as

contending forces in a common field of ever-shifting action seeking to secure their vital interests as they understand them, the dominant class clearly being “one up” in its command over surplus labour value, political power, and ideological supremacy.

Within Marxist tradition, notes Boer (1998:8-9), class is inconceivable without conflict and violence: a class is defined by being in opposition with another and class conflict is a primary motor of history. In this class struggle, producers and non-producers battle to increase, diminish, or arrest the appropriation of labour surplus.

Marxists often debate whether the state is the exploiting class or that it serves as an instrument of the exploiting classes such as landlords and merchants. In conventional Marxist theory, the state is *not* the exploiter. The state is distinct from class and is indeed generated out of class conflict (Boer 2007:33). Furthermore, the state is not identical with the ruling class. Rather, the ruling class seizes the state as an instrument for pushing its own agenda. The idea of the state as instrument raises a question of whether it is an autonomous structure, with interests of its own not necessarily equivalent to the interests of the dominant class in society. In his theory of the relative autonomy of the state, Nicos Poulantzas (1978) argues that the state might indeed have a substantial degree of autonomy, but nevertheless, it remains for all practical purposes the state of the ruling class. In his conquest theory, Franz Oppenheimer (cited in Claessen and Skalnik 1978:9) views the state as an instrument of oppression, designed to confirm social inequality. However, Gottwald (1993:155) suggests that the state in its tribute-collecting function was the primary, and perhaps even exclusive, expropriator of the subject classes in monarchic Israel. The king could not, however, be the



sole beneficiary of the extraction of the peasants' surpluses. Rather, high ranking civil, religious and military leaders, and merchants, as non-producers, also lived off the peasants' surpluses.

In Marxist analysis, one necessary function of the state - by definition - is to contain class conflict and to undertake other policies in support of the dominance of the non-producing yet surplus-appropriating and property-owning classes (Miliband 1983:65). In such a class-divided society, it is the responsibility of the state to maintain the overall structural integration and social cohesion without which the contradictions and antagonisms might lead to "the mutual ruin of the contending classes" (Jessop 2012:6). When class conflict between the exploiters and the exploited becomes intense, the state and the exploiting non-producers develop explanations that legitimate their extraction of the producing peasants' surpluses (Gottwald 1993:148). Such extraction can be justified from the point of view of service to the common good, an ancient custom, or as a demand of the gods. The exploiting classes do not want the appropriation to appear as an arbitrary intervention based on brute force but wants it to be seen as a transaction that is good for the social whole or in keeping with the will of the god(s). Apart from resisting the expropriation of their surplus labour value, the exploited peasant producers may also argue to the contrary that it is a moral and religious good that the appropriation of surplus labour value be lessened or be stopped completely. This is the beginning of what Marx calls "class consciousness," an awareness by the oppressed of their situation and the need for collective political action to bring about social change.

Through class consciousness, the oppressed see themselves as one unit that together can stand up to their oppressors, revolt and change their situation. The story of the confrontation between the elders of Israel and Jeroboam over reducing the burden of corvée labour and taxation, which led to the split of the Israelite monarchy (1 Kings 12), can be understood in this way. It seems that this onerous form of surplus extraction and corvée labour had become a widespread class grievance, and class struggle had reached boiling point. Internal contradictions had accumulated to bursting point. Rehoboam's refusal to budge opened up cracks along the fault lines of social contradiction and the northerners revolted.

The concept of class is also useful to understanding Zimbabwe's social relations. As the country moved away from independence, it does seem that ethnicity seemed to matter less and less as class became more important. Feeling neglected by the party they had put in

power, the veterans of the 1970s war of liberation mobilised themselves and were able to march to President Robert Mugabe's residence to demand that he addresses their plight or the country would be ungovernable. The pauperisation of the war veterans had become a widespread class grievance which forced them to take action. The government obliged. The formation of the MDC around the working and the middle class should also be seen in the light of class consciousness. This class became aware of its deteriorating socio-economic situation and coalesced around the newly formed political movement to take collective action to bring about political change.

### **1.4.3 Ideology**

In a mode of production characterised by relations of domination and exploitation, the role of ideology is quite central. Antonio Gramsci has argued that for acceptance and legitimation, states rely on variable combinations of force and what he calls "hegemony". While force involves the use of a coercive apparatus to bring the masses into compliance with the mode of production, by contrast, hegemony involves the successful mobilisation and reproduction of the "active consent" of the oppressed by the oppressors through the exercise of political, intellectual and moral leadership (Jessop 2012:9). Ideology justifies the exploitation of the ruling classes while pacifying the exploited from rising up against their oppressors (Jessop 2012:9). That way, they can keep paying their taxes even to the point of starving themselves. One of the chief tools for accomplishing this acceptance and legitimation in ancient societies was religion. In other words, political power was bolstered by the ideological power of religion.

Marxism places religion in the area of ideologies - the intellectual constructions whose real significance is in economic and social relations which they reflect or hide (Bonino 1993:108). Religion provides the false consciousness that blinds people to the true nature of the mode of production that expropriates their surplus labour value. The role of ideology is to justify the subordination of the many by the few. Religion is instrumental in providing moral justification for the total social order. However, Jan Rehmann (2011) brings a nuanced view, arguing that there is much more to be found in Marx's critique of religion than the traditional rejection of religion as "false consciousness" or as a mere instrument of manipulation in the hands of the ruling classes. He argues that the young Marx did not content himself with a rejection of religion, but rather developed a dialectical understanding of religion as a field of

conflicting tendencies, adding that the older Marx transformed the critique of religion inherited from Feuerbach into a critique of commodity, money, and capital fetishism (Rehmann 2011:144). Thus, after his departure from Feuerbach, the proper object of the young Marx's critique of religion is the capitalist mode of production (Rehmann 2011:148).

Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (2006: 64) remarked in their famous formulation:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, that is, the class which is the ruling material force of society is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.

For Itumeleng Mosala (1993a:55), ruling class ideology refers to the desire and attempts by the dominant classes of society to establish hegemonic control over other classes through a rationalising universalisation of what are in effect sectional class interests. In other words, the ruling elite projects its own narrow interests as interests of the whole society. The hegemony of a class, according to Antonio Gramsci (cited in Mosala 1993a:55), means that a class has succeeded in persuading other classes to accept its own ideas and values. The values and interests of society as a whole are too easily identified with the values and interests of the ruling classes in maintaining their position and privileges. Thus in the same vein, Bruce G. Trigger (2003:285) argues that politics is the contest for public endorsement of private or sectional interests.

According to Max Weber (cited in Sjoberg 1960:224), the *power* of the ruling elite is transformed into *authority* through appeal to absolutes and appeal to tradition. The appeal to absolutes is a claim to legitimisation by outside forces independent of human action (Sjoberg 1960:224). Anthropologists have long argued that the upper classes appeal to supernatural support to enhance their authority and frighten the lower classes into obeying them (Godelier 1986; Steward 1949; White 1949). The rule of the monarch and the existing socio-political and economic structure are justified on the basis of being in accordance with the will of god(s). Objections to state rule and non-compliance with the decisions of the rulers would not be seen as rebellion against the human rulers but as rebellion against the gods and this will be met with the warrants and sanctions of religion. Religion is in this case a means of intimidating the masses and therefore an instrument of social control. Ideology seems to have

played a central role in the longevity of the Davidic dynasty. The historicity of the event aside, Nathan's prophecy regarding the eternal rulership of the Davidic house (2 Sam 7) sheds light on the significance of religion in maintaining peace and stability in ancient Israel. It seems the prophet was aware of the fragility of the Davidic kingdom due to many interested parties from without the royal family. To prevent chaos, he pronounced that Yahweh had informed him that the House of David was to rule forever. Since it was a divine proclamation, any rebellion would not be seen as rebellion against the Davidic house, but a rebellion against Yahweh. Nathan can be viewed as an example of the many court prophets that kings appointed to craft religious ideologies that had political implications, and act as the monarchs' propagandists.

Ezra Chitando (2005:221) has observed that from the late 1990s political and religious discourses in Zimbabwe overlapped. ZANU PF appropriated religious texts and themes to justify its seizure of white owned farms. Both Christianity and traditional religions were employed in support of what they called the Third *Chimurenga* (revolution). Thus it was common for ordinary people on the streets to justify, not just the seizure of white farms by quoting religious themes, but also to justify why President Mugabe and his ZANU PF should continue to rule.

### ***1.5 Research Methodology***

From the beginning of modern biblical scholarship, the dominant interpretive process has been the bipolar or comparative paradigm. African biblical scholarship has also been largely bipolar, that is a comparative methodology that facilitates a parallel interpretation of biblical texts or motifs and supposed modern or African parallels, letting the two illuminate one another (West 2007:247). The bipolar approach delineated two poles or stages within the exegetical process namely, the text and context. However, scholars began to notice that the comparison of text and context is a mediated process, involving a third pole, that of "appropriation" (West 2013:1). Thus, the emergence of the "tripolar" approach. It points out the three poles of biblical interpretation as the biblical text, the context, and the act of appropriation which mediates between text and context. It is the appropriative reader who enables the textual pole and the contextual pole to dialogue. The third pole is as important as the other two. Appropriation is a mutual dynamic relationship which involves an interactive engagement between the textual and the contextual poles. Jonathan A. Draper (2002:13) talks

of biblical interpretation as a conversation; a two-way process in which each of the two poles interrogates each other and involves “talking back to the text,” interrogating it and even reading against the grain.

The context of the biblical exegete should be given priority because it is his social, economic, political and cultural context that makes him to read the text in certain way. As Draper (2002:16) notes, our social location determines what questions we ask, what tools we use to interpret the text and what counts as an answer from God. My social location also constructs ideological orientations which also constitute my engagement with the text. My context as a Zimbabwean biblical reader of a Marxist orientation will influence my reading of the political economy of monarchic Israel to identify issues of tyranny, exploitation and suppression of human rights. Where some see prosperity in the political economy of monarchic Israelite, I see exploitation and impoverishment of the masses.

The biblical text and the post-colonial Zimbabwean context do not, on their own, participate in a conversation. With respect to the biblical text, the socio-historical method of analysis will be used to locate ancient monarchic Israel in its historical context. Monarchic Israel will be treated as one among the smaller ancient Near Eastern tributary kingdoms of the Iron Age. Marxist theory will be used to analyse and to understand the nature and dynamics of the political economy of post-colonial Zimbabwe (contextual pole). The two are brought into conversation with each other through a Marxist liberationist mode of appropriation.

## ***1.6 Limitations***

This study has two limitations. The first one relates to the use of the text and has two parts. It does not focus on a specific biblical text or texts as a basis for understanding the Israelite monarchy. The second part of this is that it does not adopt a historical approach in which biblical characters like Elijah, Elisha, Saul, David and Solomon are regarded as historical figures who did as they are said to have done in the biblical text. Quite the contrary, it adopts a socio-scientific approach. That is, in its exposition of the political economy of monarchic Israel, it reiterates what is generally known of monarchies from the broader ancient Near Eastern environment. It treats ancient Israel as having a similar culture to that of the other nations in its environment, and therefore an Israelite monarchy was no different from the surrounding monarchies.

The other limitation relates to the nature of the economic ethics that emerges from the dialogue of the two political economies. We do not intend it to be a blueprint that solves the economic problems of the world. There is clearly no scientific economic theory in the modern sense in the biblical text (Meeks 1989:3). Rather as Gottwald (1993:341) argues, the ethical force of the bible on issues of economics will have to be perspectival and motivational, rather than prescriptive and technical. Following from this is the obvious difficulty of comparing an agrarian pre-industrial and pre-capitalist system with a modern capitalist and industrial society. The differences are significant. Thus apart from the resources that the biblical text provides, we are quite alive to the limitations of using it with regards to extracting an economic ethics for our contemporary world and its systems.

### ***1.7 Structure of thesis***

The thesis is made up of eight chapters. It begins with a general introduction in Chapter One in which the background and motivation of the study, as well as the theoretical framework and research methodology are briefly sketched. Key research questions, the objectives and limitations of the study are also provided.

Chapter Two discusses what we will call the “early state” as a form of socio-political organisation. It seeks to explore the various theories on the emergence of the state, its nature and characteristics, as well as problems of definition.

With that background and building on Chapter Two, Chapter Three zeroes in on the ancient Near Eastern state and an attempt is made to explain its origin. A discussion of the city-state as a form of early state takes place before the chapter leaves the broader ancient Near Eastern environment to focus on ancient Israel. The myth that Israel was unique in the ancient Near East is dispelled. The place of ancient Israel in the ancient Near East is affirmed. The cataclysmic upheavals that took place in the Late Bronze Age, leading to the demise of the great powers of the day and the emergence of Israel, are discussed. The chapter then discusses the socio-political and economic structure of pre-state Israel and concludes with the (re)turn of Israel to the tributary mode of production with the adoption of the monarchy as a form of socio-political organisation.

Chapter Four is one of the three core chapters. It discusses the political economy of monarchic Israel which we will describe as a “political economy of terror.” The place of the king in this political economy is analysed. The Marxist categories of mode of production, class, and ideology will be used as the lenses to view the political economy of monarchic Israel. Focus will also be on the mechanism used for the appropriation of the peasants’ surplus by the state and the landed elites that led to the impoverishment of the masses. The chapter ends with a discussion of the prophetic critique of this political economy of terror.

The next two chapters prepare the ground for a discussion of the political economy of post-colonial Zimbabwe. Chapter Five focuses on the “modern state.” Its origins, nature and future are discussed, as well as its difference from the early state. Challenges of definition will also be discussed. Chapter Six is on the political economy of post-colonial Africa. It looks at the drama that has been unfolding on the continent since the end of colonial rule, as well as external constraints to Africa’s progress and development.

Chapter Seven, another of the three key chapters, traces the political economy of Zimbabwe from the colonial era through the Lancaster House conference to 2017 the historic year in which veteran dictator President Mugabe was removed from office. It looks at the key moments and events of this period, exposes the primitive accumulation by those in the corridors of power and their strong arm tactics to silence the masses, and concludes that the political economy of post-colonial Zimbabwe is indeed a political economy of terror.

Chapter Eight, the third of the key chapters, brings the two contexts to the table to dialogue with one another. From this dialogue, a biblically derived economic ethics will emerge and we will discuss the nature and limitations of this ethics.

The thesis ends with a summary of the key elements of this work. It will indicate the extent to which the objectives of the work have been achieved. It will end with suggesting some areas for further research.

## CHAPTER TWO: THE EARLY STATE

### *2.0 Introduction*

Human beings have lived in small-scale societies without a state system for about two million years of their existence on earth. It was only about five thousand years ago that humanity began to organise itself into larger socio-political units, a process that continued progressively, leading to the formation of the first known state in about 4000 BCE (Carneiro 1970:733). The state is, thus, a very recent form of socio-political organisation. As Friedrich Engels (1972:232) puts it, the state has not existed from all eternity and there have been societies which have managed without it, which had no notion of the state or state power. For most of its history, humanity functioned without even a primitive form of state. Thus the period in which human beings have been organised into states is a minute part of the entire history of the human race.

But since its emergence, it has engulfed virtually the entirety of humankind. It has probably been the single most important socio-economic and political force and the most powerful, continuously authoritative, and most inclusive organisational structure ever developed in the history of the universe. More than ever before human beings now live under the shadow of the state (Miliband 1970:1). It has become so powerful and controlling that it is impossible not to be aware of its presence or be affected by it. It has come to dominate humanity so much so that no power on earth is above or comparable to it. Whatever humanity wants to be or attain, either individually or corporately, mainly depends on the state's approval. While it controls them, it is also for its control that humans compete. As a socio-political system, it dictates how its subjects ought to behave, what they should do and what they should not. It demands unfailing respect from its subjects and causes greater inequity among them than any known earlier system. It forces human beings to give up so much of their freedoms to subordinate to it. It literally moves mountains and re-directs rivers, and it has on occasion sent thousands, even millions, to their deaths (Cohen 1978:1).

What it is and what it does, why, how and under what conditions such a powerful and pervasive structure has come to be, and what value it has for its subjects has claimed the attention of scholars for a long time. Paradoxically while scholars have produced volumes on government, public administration, bureaucracy, political parties, voting behaviour and political authority, the remarkable thing is that the state qua state, as a subject of political



study, has not aroused such interest from the scholarly community (Miliband 1970:1-2). Of course, many of these works have included a discussion on the nature and role of the state, but the state itself has received marginal attention. In fact, many theorists did not see it as worth of scholarly investigation. In the early 1950s, David Easton (cited in Miliband 1970:2) for example, wrote “neither the state nor power is a concept that serves to bring together political research”. Proposing that the idea of a state is a source of mystification that it should be excluded from social analysis, Alfred Reginald Radcliffe-Brown (cited in Abrams 1977:75) argued that the concepts of government and politics are all that is needed for a sufficient conceptual understanding of the political.

Recently, however, the state has been rediscovered and “brought back in” for scholarly enquiry. This rediscovery of academic interest in the study of the state has taken place at a time of widespread loss of intellectual faith in its proficiency, leading some critics to suggest that the state might as well be on its sunset (Pierson 2004:1). In fact, talk of the “end” of the state is quite fashionable in the academic world. There is a widespread conviction that the state will cease to be the chief source of political authority in the near future because it will give way to and be replaced by new forms of authority and community which go beyond the inherited divide between the local and the international (Bartelson 2001:1). Groupings of nations such as the United Nations (UN), EU and the AU, are said to be developing *en route* to becoming larger socio-political and economic organisations, with the result that the state will sooner or later enjoy a fate similar to that of the tribe, the city-state, and the empire in history (Bartelson 2001:1). But there is more: critics are increasingly condemning the state as inefficient and undemocratic and not worthy of the citizens’ sacrifices. Furthermore, the state is accused of not being independent but succumbing to pressures from the markets and international or global networks.

Does the state have a future? Are we witnessing the twilight of the state or simply the metamorphosis of old powers into new forms? (Pierson 2004: 3). It does seem like the state will be around in the foreseeable future. If anything, there seems to be renewed interest in the sovereignty of states such that some of the groupings of the states (such as the EU) are in danger of breaking up as the states assert their sovereignty.

In this chapter, focus is on the “early state”, as an object of scholarly enquiry. The “modern state” shall be dealt with in Chapter 5. Following Henri J.M. Claessen and Peter Skalník

(1978), the term “early state” will be used to refer to the initial beginnings of a centralised polity whose mode of production is agrarian and pre-industrial. We shall discuss the definitional challenge, how scholars from various ideological persuasions have accounted for the origins of the state and its defining characteristics. By so doing, it is believed that sufficient foundation would have been laid for a discussion on the ancient Israelite state and its political economy.

## ***2.1 The early state***

The “early state,” according to Lawrence Krader (1978:5) refers to the initial stage of the evolution of the pre-capitalist non-industrial state. Comparative studies (cf. Krader 1968; Claessen 1970) demonstrate that the structure, functioning and evolution of early states of all times and places display an amazing degree of uniformity (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:5). This is because the challenges posed by organising groups of people with different access to the means of production, as well as organising communication and defense, and the need to find ideological justifications for a given situation are in all cases similar (Claessen 1981: 60-61). The fact that early forms of state organisation display certain universal features makes us argue that it is possible to come up with an acceptable definition of the early state as well as delineate some of its key features. While the latter may be a fairly simple task, the former is not as easy as it appears. But before delving into these undertakings, it is proposed that a determination of the probable origins of the early state be undertaken in case that might shed some light on or anticipate some challenges of definition and nature of the early state.

### **2.1.1 Origins of the early state**

Although it was the most far-reaching political development in human history, there is no single universally acceptable theory on the origin of the state. Theories of the origin of the state are fairly modern. Classical writers like Aristotle and Plato, did not concern themselves with an explanation of the origins of the state because they considered it natural since they were unfamiliar with other forms of socio-political organisation (Carneiro 1970:733). However, by exploring the world, Europeans became aware that countless peoples around the world lived, not in states, but in independent small scale groups such as villages and tribes. That was an eye-opener which made the state appear less natural, and therefore in need of explanation (Carneiro 1970:733). Analyses of the state have been done by all kinds of

scholars: philosophers, historians, political scientists, archaeologists, sociologists, anthropologists and biblical scholars, as they tried to shed light on the problem from their own discipline.

Robert L. Carneiro (1970:733) divides theories of state origins into two broad categories: “voluntaristic” and “coercive.” Elman R. Service (1978:21) labels them ‘integrative’ and “conflict” theories. It should be borne in mind that even though we consider them here as qualitatively different, in actuality these categories are not mutually exclusive. We are concerned with characterising theories, not actuality. Each of the two has several sub-types. A growing number of contemporary scholars appear to avoid clear identification with one side or the other of this theoretical controversy, probably because there seems to be the growing awareness that each side has some validity (Cohen 1978:7). In similar fashion, looking for our own concise theory of state origins in this work will be an exercise in futility. Rather, we evaluate some of the leading theories on the origins of the state under this loose classification.

### **2.1.1.1 Voluntaristic theories**

Voluntaristic theories hold that, at some point in their history, certain groups of people willingly and spontaneously gave up their individual autonomy and united with other smaller groups to form a larger socio-political unit called a state (Carneiro 1970:733). Though voluntaristic theorists do not deny the existence of such factors as inequality, force, conflict or exploitation, their emphasis is on the emergence of the state as a useful association of people who benefited from cooperation and from an effective central government (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:17). Scholars who hold this view stress that the state was well-received and supported by its subjects as a solution to problems that demanded more centralised coordination of the polity. For would-be subjects of a state, centralised government offered protection and security, as well as mechanisms for settling disputes. In exchange, the subjects would show absolute loyalty to the state. For these benefits, the subjects were ready to make certain sacrifices. For them, the benefits of the state outweighed the burden it imposed on them.

Perhaps the most popular of the voluntaristic theories is what Carneiro (1970:733) calls the “automatic” theory. According to this theory, the invention of agriculture automatically

brought about a food surplus, which enabled certain individuals to divorce themselves from food production to become specialists, such as potters, weavers, smiths, etc. thus creating a division of labour. From this specialisation there developed a political integration which united a number of autonomous groupings into a state (Carneiro 1970:733). A major weakness of this theory is the assumption that agriculture produces a food surplus. Agriculture does not automatically produce a food surplus as most agricultural peoples of the world would testify. Carneiro (1970:734) notes that virtually all agricultural Amazonian Indians in aboriginal times did not produce a food surplus. More importantly, a food surplus on its own does not automatically lead to the formation of a state; a society with a huge food surplus might remain a chiefdom.

Another voluntaristic theory of state origins is the “hydraulic hypothesis” (also called “irrigation hypothesis”), which was first proposed in the 1930s and popularised by Julian H. Steward (1955). Steward reconstructed a succession of stages of the evolution of communities from hunting and gathering level to the state, namely hunting and gathering, incipient agriculture, formative period (of the state), regional florescence, initial conquests, dark ages and cyclical conquests (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:10). In Steward's opinion, irrigation made possible the leaps from one stage to the next because it led to the concentration of large numbers of people who needed organisation and coordination. In the end it led to state formation. Though Steward acknowledges that conquest played a role in some of the stages, he regarded it as an *effect* rather than a *cause* of this development (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:11). It is Karl Wittfogel (1957) who was the most enthusiastic defender of this theory. According to him, in certain dry areas, where villagers practised subsistence agriculture, a time arrived when they saw that it would be to the good of all to give up their individual autonomies and merge their villages into a single large political unit capable of carrying out large-scale irrigation (Carneiro 1970:734). The effective management of large volumes of water necessarily required efficient organisation. A “hydraulic economy” characterised by the division of labour, intensive cultivation and cooperation on a large scale inevitably developed with the state eventually assumed the managerial role (Wittfogel 1957:22). Thus the officials appointed (or self-appointed) to administer such extensive irrigation works became the leaders of the nascent state (Carneiro 1970:734).

Both Steward and Wittfogel's hypothesis that irrigation is the cause of state formation has not been proved to be of nomothetic value (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:11). There are many

examples of states that emerged without irrigation works, and conversely there are many societies that had irrigation works but did not cross the threshold into states (cf. Claessen and Skalnik 1978:11). Irrigation does not necessarily require hierarchy to operate. In three of the areas that Wittfogel cites as illustrating his “hydraulic hypothesis” - Mesopotamia, China, and Mexico - archaeology has shown that states developed long before large-scale irrigation works (Carneiro 1970:734). Eva Hunt and Robert Hunt (1978:114ff.) also argue that irrigation is neither a necessary nor a sufficient cause of the development of the state. Thus, as a cause of the development of the state, irrigation seems inadequate. This does not, however, mean that the development of irrigation works does not have any influence on the evolution of political systems. The organisation and control of extensive irrigation works is often closely related to political power (Smith 1969; Downing and Gibson 1974), while the involvement of political leaders with irrigation systems frequently leads to an escalation of bureaucratic or managerial leanings.

In his *Origins of the state and civilisation* (1975), Service points out that in the stages leading up to the establishment of a state, political leadership is often associated with personal qualities, rather than with economic differences. The emergence of this type of leader is often accompanied by the development of reciprocal and redistributive actions (Service 1975: 292). The leader's position in the society is strengthened by doing the job well (Service 1975:293). He avers that warfare among neighbours gives people an appreciation of the protection that centralised leadership offers. He gives examples of the defensive measures taken against raiding nomads in northwest China and Mesopotamia which stimulated the growth of walled towns, intensified agriculture and the rise of powerful centralised governmental systems (Service 1975:259, 271). He adds that people accept more centralised polities because of the utility of such a system in the face of outside dangers (Cohen 1978:46). The benefits of being part of the society obviously outweigh the alternative. The need for protection under these circumstances is obvious; as a result of this it was better to be a member of the state than not to be one (Service 1975:299). The problem with Service's theory is how such “charismatic positions” were transformed into “offices.”

The best known voluntaristic theory is the so-called “social contract” theory, which is associated with Jean-Jacques Rousseau. It is well known that we do not need to narrate it here. It is now known that no such contract was ever subscribed to by human groups in history. The theory is today nothing more than a historical curiosity (Carneiro 1970:733).

Another voluntaristic theory is by Robert H. Lowie (1922) who proposed that the “association”, that is, a number of people acting together voluntarily, might have led to the formation of the state. As an example he mentioned the “clubs” of the Indians, which played a leading role in organising the buffalo hunt and showed great skill during the hunting season (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:10). A centralised power could have developed from this type of association. However, Lowie did not give a detailed explanation of how the state came to be from these clubs. In order to account for the origin of the state we might have to look elsewhere.

### **2.1.1.2 Conflict theories**

It is a demonstrable fact that state formation involves innumerable conflicts. According to conflict theories increased centralisation of institutions of governance arises out of competition between groups competing for access to scarce resources leaving one group triumphant. This can come through conquest, through increasing population density that presses on resources forcing one group to take power, or through the possession by one or a few kin groups of traditionally privileged access to resources not granted to other groups (Cohen 1978:6).

Warfare has been proposed as a cause of statehood. Hebert Spencer (1967) suggested that the organisational know-how required by warfare, its hierarchy and command spread from the military to society. In his view, outstanding warriors become kings and bring military discipline to government. He cites the rise of the Mongol empire under military leaders as a good example of how war can lead to statehood. When a group triumphs over others, then its leaders develop a system of governance and administration over the area. Keith F. Otterbein (1970) added weight to this theory arguing that warfare demands absolute obedience to leaders. He observed that obedience and subordination are quite prevalent among the military and concluded that subordination within the military leads to subordination within the political community, which supports further development of the military (Otterbein 1970:28). According to Spencer (1967:37), military organisation is the model for political organisation and military hierarchy and its insistence on discipline and subordination are the basis of government when carried over into peace time. Ronald Cohen critiques this theory on the grounds that subordination, obedience and discipline are also found across many areas of uncentralised social and political life, such as in hunting, religious ceremonies, family life,

etc. and asks why we should attribute increased subordination in government to only one institution at the pre-state level while disregarding others (Cohen 1978:45-46). Furthermore, a number of scholars (e.g. Fried 1967; Service 1975) suggest that societal evolution comes first, and then provides a basis for the increased scale, frequency, and success of warfare. Citing specific cases, they argue that a more disciplined and organised social group produces larger armies, better defense against external aggressors, and kindles the use of warfare as a form of inter-societal relations (Cohen 1978:46). Thus, warfare is stirred by statehood, and as Service (cited in Cohen 1978:46) suggests, warfare *follows* state formation.

There can be little doubt, however, that in one way or another, warfare played an important role in the rise of many early states. Archaeological evidence of war is found in the early stages of state formation in Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, China, central Africa, Polynesia and Middle America to name only a few (Carneiro 1970:734). With the Germanic kingdoms of northern Europe especially in mind, Edward Jenks observed that it is almost obvious that all states owe their existence to warfare (Carneiro 1970:734). Jan Vansina also shows that state after state in central Africa arose as a result of successful warfare (Carneiro 1970:734). Obviously warfare is not the whole story. Although its causal connections to state formation are complex, we believe that it is an important factor (Cohen 1978:46). In fact, Cohen (1978:46) argues, there does seem to be anthropological evidence for the possibility that war can, under the proper circumstances, fuel a development that can turn some loosely organised groups into a centralised state.

The “conquest” theory was first promulgated by Ibn Khaldun with a concern for the dynamic relations between nomadic and sedentary societies (Service 1978:24). Other theorists (e.g. Oppenheimer 1909) were impressed with Darwinian conflict and the idea of “survival of the fittest,” which they used as a basis for their version of the conflict theory. Relevant for this work is emphasis on conquest as the permanent subjugation of losers by winners that gives rise to the basic repressive forms of the state. In his well-known *Ueberlagerungstheorie* (1909), Franz Oppenheimer (cited in Claessen and Skalnik 1978:10) averred that the state was an instrument of oppression, designed to confirm social inequality. In his view, however, this inequality originated in the conquest and subjection of one people by another. Coming very close to Engels, he argued that this subjection had no other purpose than the economic exploitation of the defeated (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:10). He further argued that because of their organisational abilities and speed, the pastoral nomads were able to conquer and

subject the sedentary agriculturalists, who accepted their defeat and subjugation and paid tribute to the conquerors (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:10). The organisation needed to accomplish this was the state. In his criticism of this theory, Lowie (cited in Claessen and Skalnik 1978:10) argued that conquest did not always lead to state formation. Furthermore, some states developed without any conquest of another group of peoples. Many studies have shown internal developments leading to the emergence of the state, or in which peaceful contacts between neighbouring peoples resulted in state formation (cf. Lewis 1966; Cohen 1974). Granted, conquest could mark the origin of early states, the relevant internal conditions also had to be present for the state to come into existence (Khazanov 1978:83). This leads us to the conclusion that while the development of the state was impacted by conquest in some cases, conquest cannot be the only mechanism responsible for state formation.

The “class-struggle” hypothesis of the origin of the state was popularised by Lewis H. Morgan (1877) who characterised ancient societies as communistic, without commerce and private property, social classes of rich and poor and despotic monarchs. Improvements in technology saw increased productivity which in turn led to private property, economic classes and the state. Impressed by Morgan’s work, Marx and Engels expanded on his ideas. Engels hypothesised that initially there existed only common ownership of the means of production but as societies improved their technology, increased their production and traded the resulting surplus, there arose middlemen, entrepreneurs, capital, thus culminating in economic classes (Service 1978:25). The surplus was appropriated for the benefits of those who no longer participated in food production. He characterised the merchants and middle men as “veritable parasitic plants,” who, while “skimming the cream of the production”, rendered only minor services in return, and in this way gathered enormous riches, which gave them great influence in society, and made possible their ever growing influence on production (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:7). The state arose when the need arose to protect a developing private property. Thus, the state emerged for the purposes of preserving a class society. It arose in the thick of the fight between the classes from the need to keep class antagonisms in check (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:6). The influence of military force, war, and conquest played a considerable role in Engel’s theory. The repressive state attends to the political bolstering of this society, erecting a structure to preserve the class interests of the rich. Engels argued that society is powerless to contain the irreconcilable antagonisms and class contradictions within it. He writes,



... in order that these antagonisms and classes with conflicting economic interests might not consume themselves and society in fruitless struggle, it became necessary to have a power seemingly standing above society that would alleviate the conflict, and keep it within the bounds of "order;" and this power, arisen out of society but placing itself above it, and alienating itself more and more from it, is the state (Engels 1884).

What is significant and worth noting is the relationship between the development of private ownership of the means of production and social classes on the one hand, and the origin of the state on the other. While for voluntaristic theory, social stratification is coterminous with state formation, for conflict theory, stratification precedes state formation.

Service (1978:25-26) critiques the class-struggle hypothesis on the ground that examples are lacking in the ancient world of a situation where commodity production and private wealth were likely pre-conditions for the class system or the primitive state. After surveying ancient societies from around the world, Service (1975:284-285) finds little or no support for the idea that early states originate from the efforts of the dominant groups in society using coercive force, or threat, to protect its unequal rights over resources. Once it comes into existence, as an evolved form of socio-political organisation, the early state is clearly stratified, and a ruling class does, ubiquitously, have unequal access to coercive power and wealth. It would seem, therefore, that this and other Marxist theories describe the *results* rather than the *causes* of state formation (Cohen 1978: 51).

The class-struggle theory has been taken over and argued at length by Morton H. Fried who has argued that a stratified society is one in which members of the same sex and equivalent age do not have equal access to the basic resources that sustain life (Fried 1967:186). According to Fried (1967:191), stratification appears the moment the communal means of production is replaced by private ownership. The most important factor responsible for this transition, in his view, is growing population pressure on the resources (Fried 1967:204). It is this unequal access to resources that is the essential condition for the evolution of statehood. Those that have such access have to protect it. To do so they must use force and stabilise the differential relations to resources by means of a system of centralised government that makes them into a ruling elite. As he puts it, the state receives its key impetus from the need to protect the stratification system (Fried 1978:39). The extent of internal disputes and conflicts

caused by this inequality is so great that the kin-organised social system cannot cope; hence an increasing emphasis is placed on non-kinship repressive mechanisms and it is precisely these mechanisms that mature, coalesce, and form the state (Fried 1967:225). The primary functions of the state are thus internal and external maintenance of a specific order of stratification (Fried 1967:235).

Fried was impressed by the need of the dominant class to control access to scarce resources and believed that the state emerges out of actions by the powerful to restrict access to resources and sustain their control (Cohen 1978:15). He suggested that the state is the organisation developed to maintain, if necessary by force, the unequal access to basic resources. Stratification is thus coterminous with the state as to be synonymous with it. For this reason, Fried does not provide any instances of a stratified society that has not yet acquired its state apparatus or that seems to be in the process of forming it (Service 1978:27). The state is a supreme integrative apparatus above the level of kinship institutions which integrates societies, by preventing disintegration by repressions of various kinds. Such repressions are its main function and, thus, its reason for coming into being (Service 1978:28). Fried's theory was applied by Conrad P. Kottak (1972) to the development of the state in Uganda and he observed how factors such as increasing population, changes in the means of subsistence, and the development of a market economy went together with the development to a stratified society and finally to the state.

Service sees a problem with Fried's theory. He notes that while most ancient societies and states were stratified, however, these strata were not based on differences in wealth, forms of property, or differential access to strategic resources (Service 1978:32). Quite the contrary, he argues, the difference was in political and religious power, and this power was so absolute that it did not need to be buttressed by economic advantage (Service 1978:32). More importantly, Service (1975) argues that there is a dearth of known cases of social stratification prior to statehood. He argues instead that those conditions leading to centralised government bring with them the development of a ruling class. In this sense social stratification is a *result*, not a cause, of state formation (Cohen 1978:7). Service (1975:276-278) also thinks that it is organisation, not population pressure, that provides the means and impetus to statehood. For him population growth and food scarcities are *enablers* not causes of social complexity. However, we will argue in the next chapter that with regards to the rise of the ancient Near Eastern state, stratification preceded state formation. We will also warn

up to the idea that the upper classes will always want to protect their possessions, thus the need for a state.

### **2.1.2 Analysis of theories of state origins**

A close examination of the state formation theories sketched above is rather like a projective test in that it provides more insight into the theorist than into the reality itself (Cohen 1978:141). Conflict theorists see warfare, conquest, inequalities of power, and access to resources as having important causal priorities in pre-state systems. Those from the other side look to voluntary association and the positive spin-offs of belonging to a centralised polity as having causal effect on the emergence of the state. While voluntary theorists are clearly most impressed by the benefits of statehood, the latter stress its cost and inequalities. Theorists are often successful in proving that their theory is correct for the cases they have studied, but when one tries to apply these theories on a global scale, their inadequacy becomes apparent (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:3). None of these factors is sufficient to produce centralisation or is always and everywhere a precursor to state formation. History and ethnography can be found to support or refute all of the theories. In many instances, hypothesised causes can be shown to be consequences rather than antecedent correlates of this evolutionary sequence (Cohen 1978).

What is needed, in our view, is a more synthetic position in which state origin is viewed as a systemic process in which changes in one factor trigger a chain reaction of changes in a set of related factors, culminating in the emergence of a state (Cohen 1978:142). State formation can be viewed as an output of any number of the factors. Viewed this way, state formation is a process in which many variables are interlinked. The initial impetus could be population pressure, conquest, defense, internal strife, protection of privileges by a higher ranking group, or the benefits to be derived from subordination to centralised authority (Cohen 1978:8). Whatever sets off the process tends as well to set off other changes which, no matter how different they are to begin with, all tend to produce similar results (Cohen 1978:8). It is this similarity of result that has muddled causality. Similar result implies common antecedents. It is now clear that there are multiple and varied roads to statehood. Each set of factors, or any particular factor, once it develops, stimulates and feeds back onto others which are then made to change in the general direction of statehood. Although its roots may be multiple, once a society or group of them start developing toward early statehood, the end is the same, no

matter where it occurs. This can explain why early states so far removed from one another as Inca Peru, ancient China, Egypt, early Europe, or pre-colonial West Africa have so many striking similarities of organisation, culture and society (Cohen 1978:70). States arose independently in different places and at different times. Where appropriate conditions existed, the state emerged (Carneiro 1970:733).

But probably a more serious critique of all these theories from a Marxist perspective is that they equate the state with the ruling class. The state is not synonymous with the ruling class. Rather it arises out of the conflict between the ruling class and the peasants. This point will be given more flesh in the discussion of the “modern” state in Chapter Five.

### **2.1.3 Problems of definition**

The foregoing discussion on the origins of the state seems to imply that we are clear about what a state is. However, that is very far from being so. We have come to take the “state” for granted as an object of political practice and political analysis while remaining quite amazingly unclear as to what it is (Abrams 1988:55). We think that we know the state when we see it, yet it is extremely difficult to bring it under some brief but generally acceptable definition (Pierson 2004:5). For all the interest in the state, the very simple task of establishing what we mean by the “state” remains elusive. Indeed, at times our sense of the importance of the state and its contemporary problems appear to be matched only by an inescapable frustration at its sheer ungraspability (Pearson 2004:1). In attempting to define the state, we encounter a confusing range of options, including even dropping the idea of the state altogether (Pierson 2004:2). Scholars are unanimous that the state is complex and a little fuzzy around the edges (Pierson 2004:1). A universally acceptable definition does not as yet exist and this leads to a situation whereby almost every scholar comes up with his or her own definition, which differs slightly from the already existing ones, although some of them can be grouped into “schools” with a similar approach (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:3). That way, it is practically impossible to arrive at synthesis.

An issue that further frustrates efforts for a good definition of the state is that when non-state systems are compared with state systems, there is no fine line dividing the two. The transition from a loose kin-based socio-political organisation to a state was not clear, simple or sudden. The general picture in case studies from all over the world appears to be that of early states

developing gradually from earlier organisational forms. Tendencies towards statehood were evident long before the early state came into existence. A complex social structure is already present in earlier non-state systems. Centralising tendencies are found long before the emergence of the centralised state while many characteristics of pre-state phases such as, communal ownership of land, allegiance to family or clan heads, also outlived the pre-state organisational forms (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:621). In her study of the early Yoruba state, Natalia B. Kochakova (1978) talks of the “dualistic character” of the state to indicate that aspects of both tribal and class societies were present. Aron Ia Gurevich (1978), in his study of Norway, also argues that it is not possible to accurately delineate the phases of state formation because the aspects of an earlier phase are very much alive in the later phase. Estellie Smith (cited in Claessen and Skalnik 1978:622) expresses the same view adding that the simpler socio-cultural organisational forms have not vanished, but have adapted to the emergent reality.

For this reason, it is not possible to pinpoint the exact moment of the emergence of the state in this evolution process. We cannot tell when or where the decisive “step” into statehood was made (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:620). The early state did not just make a sudden appearance. Neither was it invented nor discovered by somebody (Krader 1978:104). In the same vein, William G. Sumner and Albert G. Keller (cited in Fried 1978:37) argue that

it is no longer possible to think of the state as a conscious invention, suddenly introduced as an antidote to confusion and chaos. The state must have evolved from rudimentary and inchoate beginnings, by a process of growth that was so slow as to have been all but imperceptible. Even if the full record of that development were available, we would not be able to say precisely *when* the state began (*italics added*).

### **2.1.3.1 Definitions of the state**

According to Cohen (1978:2) definitions of the early state can roughly be grouped into three. There are those that emphasise social stratification, those that emphasise authority structures and/or information processing, and those that highlight diagnostic traits. The first category of definitions is the Marxist school which highlights the relationship between the rise of state and the formation of permanent social classes. Although this category is traced to Rousseau, it was popularised by Marx and Engels. Fried developed their ideas further. Social stratification is regarded as a universal feature of early state. Valued goods, services, and

positions in a stratified state are enjoyed differentially. The power elite are well-off while the rest of the population struggle to make ends meet. The state is an instrument of control, created and used by the ruling classes to maintain control over the means of production and maintaining themselves in power over the lower classes (Cohen 1978:33). They also regard the state as an instrument for protecting the privileges of the ruling classes (Kradner 1968:25). Rousseau (cited in Cohen 1978:33) argued that the state was originally created by the rich to protect themselves against those who could attack them. He saw the state as promoting inequality between rich and poor thus putting the latter into perpetual labour, slavery and wretchedness (Cohen 1978:33). Marx and Engels see the state as a correlate of class formation developed by the upper class owners of the means of production to protect the interests of their privileged class (Kradner 1968:25). Fried (1967:186) takes the same route and defines the state as “a centralised governmental system that emerges inevitably from any system of institutionalised inequity in which the leaders, or ruling group, have special access to those resources that sustain and enhance life.” The strength of the Marxist understanding is that the ruling class domination by use of the state is a universal characteristic of early states. A more detailed discussion of the Marxist theory will be made in Chapter Five.

The second category of definitions, those that stress authority structures, is traced to Leonard T. Hobhouse et al. (1915) who defined the state as a hierarchical and centralised authority system in which local entities lose their autonomy and become districts subordinated to the centre (Cohen 1978:34). Related to this approach but somewhat different is the “information-systems” definition of Henry T. Wright and Gregory A. Johnson (1985) which views the state as a total decision-making organisation in which specialised administrative centres make decisions affecting the actions of lower level settlements and their activities. Wright (1978:55-56) writes that

a state can be recognised as a society with specialised decision-making organisations that are receiving messages from many different sources, recording these messages, supplementing them with previously stored data, making the actual decision, storing both the message and the decision and conveying decisions back to other organisations.

For him political systems with such an organisation contrast with those in which relations between the society’s component organisations are mediated only by a generalised decision-

maker and with those in which relations between component organisations are exclusively self-regulating (Wright 1978:56). He adds that a state is a socio-cultural system in which there is a differentiated, internally specialised decision-making sub-system that regulates varying exchanges among other sub-systems and with other systems (Wright 1978:56). Wright and Johnson regard all political and social life as a series of transactions or information flows in which higher levels of decision making affect lower levels of the authority structure (Cohen 1978:3). For them, an organisation must have at least three levels of hierarchy to function as a state in which information is stored, processed, summarised and transmitted so that information at the top affects behaviour at lower levels of hierarchy (Cohen 1978:34). The problem with defining states as centrally organised hierarchies is that this classification will also include pre-state polities. This definition cannot distinguish clearly between such organisational forms as chieftaincy or tribe and statehood.

The last category of definitions, those that highlight diagnostic traits, lumps together as many common characteristics of early centralised states as possible. For example, after a comparative analysis of twenty one pre-capitalist state formations from all over the world, Claessen and Skalnik (1978:640) define the early state as

the centralised socio-political organisation for the regulation of social relations in a complex, stratified society divided into at least two basic strata, or emergent social classes - viz. the rulers and the ruled - whose relations are characterised by political dominance of the former and tributary obligation of the latter, legitimised by a common ideology of which reciprocity is the basic principle.

The problem with this type of definition is that it is almost impossible to come up with a set of traits that applies to more than a few societies (Cohen 1978:3). This further turns the definition of an early state into a generalised model of a particular form of political system. The more numerous the traits, the more difficult the list is to apply. Having looked at issues of definition, it is fitting to begin to focus on the ancient Near Eastern state as the larger context within which ancient Israel was located.

## **2.2 The ancient Near Eastern state as early state**

As noted above, the “early state” refers to the state in the pre-capitalist non-industrial era of the evolution of political society. It was also noted that early forms of state organisation displayed certain universal features. There is therefore justification in viewing the ancient Near Eastern state as an “early state.” Using literature from the ancient Near East itself and from comparative societies elsewhere in human history, it is possible to determine what the ancient Near Eastern state might have looked like, that is, its organisational aspects and institutions. But before embarking on that task, it is important to discuss the three types of the early state as distinguished by Claessen and Skalnik (1978). These are: the inchoate early state, the typical early state, and the transitional early state.

### **2.2.1 The inchoate early state**

The inchoate early state is one in which kinship and family ties still dominate political relations and succession to high office is for the most part hereditary (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:641). Communal ownership of the means of production is dominant and social differences are offset by reciprocity and close contacts between the rulers and the ruled (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:23). Full-time specialists are rare; the judicial system still lacks codified laws, and there are no special professional judges. The rudimentary nature of the governmental machinery causes *ad hoc* decisions and the personal presence of the monarch is often necessary. In similar fashion, remuneration of the officials is not systematised. In an inchoate early state, trade and markets are of only local importance. Taxation systems are not fully developed and taxes are neither regular nor accurate but are mostly *ad hoc*. These taxes consist for the greater part of voluntary gifts and occasional labour for the state, neither of which are either very regular or accurately defined (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:641).

### **2.2.2 The typical early state**

An early state is considered to be “typical” if the ties of kinship are offset by territorial ones. There is competition, and appointment to office counterbalances the principles of heredity of office (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:23). Non-kin office holders begin to play a leading role in government administration, while salaried bureaucrats become common (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:23). Private ownership of land is still very limited, but state ownership is



gradually becoming important. Trade and markets are developed at the supra-local level. A start towards codification of laws and penalties is found and formal judges are present. Regular tribute, partly in kind and partly in services, is exacted, and major works, organised by government functionaries, are being undertaken with the aid of compulsory labour (Claessen and Skalnik 1978: 641).

### **2.2.3 The transitional early state**

The transitional early state is one in which government administration is dominated by appointed officials and where kinship influences have been demoted to peripheral aspects of government (Claessen 1978:23). Salaried bureaucrats dominate and the governmental machinery is becoming relatively independent from the ruling class. The development of overtly opposed classes begins to make itself manifest. At this stage, trade and markets play an important role while private ownership of the means of production is the norm (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:589). In this phase, laws have been codified, and justice is administered by professional judges. The taxation system has developed to ensure regular flow of taxes (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:641). Prerequisites for the development of a full-blown state are now in place.

This categorisation seems quite tempting. However, as noted earlier, it is difficult to distinguish the early state from earlier pre-state forms, especially chiefdom. Most of the characteristics listed for each of the stages are already found in one form or another in earlier stages of development. Service (1975:150) argues that some of the forms we have here classified as inchoate are actually chiefdoms when classified on a different set of criteria. As with the distinction between the state and earlier forms, it is equally difficult to point out the exact moment when a polity evolves from the inchoate to the typical early state or from the typical to the transitional early state. Furthermore, not all of the criteria will apply specifically to only one type. Thus a criterion can be present in two or even all three types. For example, between heredity and appointment there exists an entire scale of gradual degrees of transition, from the dominance of kinship ties to the dominance of appointment (Claessen 1978:589). The same also applies to many other aspects such as the presence of salaried full-time specialists or the taxation system. The only distinctive criteria, Claessen (1978:589) argues, seem to be those of the emergence of a market economy, private ownership of the means of production as well as the open social antagonisms of the transitional early state.

## ***2.3 Characteristics of the early state***

From various case studies of the early state from different times in history and different places of the world, it is possible to identify some general characteristics of the early state. Here we will not make strong historical claims. However, we make fairly strong sociological claims about the nature of those societies.

### **2.3.1 Social stratification**

It does seem that in all early states there is a division of the population into rather broad, more or less stabilised categories of a hierarchical nature, based on status and/or power (Claessen 1978:546). We can distinguish at least three social categories. At the helm of the early state is the ruler and his kin. Below these is the nobility. These might have included specialised professionals like priests, traders, artisans and military leaders. At the lowest rung are the peasants. These are smallholders, that is, people who work their ancestral or communally owned land. Other studies include slaves, right at the bottom of the social ladder. It is to be noted that these social categories are not cast in stone as they vary from one place to the next. Some studies show up to twelve social categories (cf. Claessen 1978:546). However, there seems to be scholarly unanimity on the presence of a sovereign and kin, an aristocracy and smallholders in early states. In the Marxist tradition, there are two basic social classes, that is, the rulers and the ruled, or the producers and non-producers, or the oppressors and the oppressed. The ruled are those who are directly engaged in food production while the rulers are not directly involved. The direct producers labour and toil for both themselves and for those whose relation to social production is either indirect or non-existent (Kradner 1978:93). Surplus labour product from the producers reaches the power elite in the form of taxes, tribute or gifts, and is used by the “willing non-producers” for their own upkeep and the maintenance of the administrative apparatus (Claessen 1978:588). The monarch bequeathed gifts to his favoured subjects mostly for patronage purposes.

According to Skolnik (1978:614), this mode of surplus appropriation did not bring much wealth to the power elite, which seems to imply that there was not much difference between them and the producers in terms of their standard of living. As a result, it did not provoke much protest from the exploited majority, thus, he argues, it would not be possible to talk of

“class struggle” in the early state because the antagonistic social classes were yet to be fully developed (Skalnik 1978:614). Hence, it is proper to speak of “emergent” social classes. Exploitation was rather discreet and largely invisible in the context of a common ideology of reciprocity and mutual aid. Furthermore, Claessen (1978:588) argues, stratification was not based on the ownership or control of the means of production since this ownership or control was an uncommon phenomenon and of very little significance for the attainment of a high status in the early state (Claessen 1981:60). Service (1978:32) agrees, adding that these classes were not based on differences in wealth or “differential access to strategic resources” but the difference was in political and religious *power*. This however, is not to deny the existence of social stratification in the early state.

As a result of social stratification, state life and political culture were witnessed and enjoyed only by the ruling class while the villagers engaged in food production and lived their lives separately from the state and were barely affected by it. Their role was to keep the state machinery alive by supplying it with food and labour. Once the tax had been collected from them, they totally forgot about the court, and were in turn forgotten by the sovereign (Kradler 1976:114).

### **2.3.2 Centralisation**

Another key feature of the early state was a centralised governing nucleus, composed of the monarch, his family, advisors, high-ranking bureaucrats and military leaders. It had the power to maintain law and order and to prevent fission. There seems to have been a headquarters, rather than a capital city in the usual sense of the word, which was the centre of government. There the court was located and there the monarch and his inner circle resided and worked from. From this centre, laws, decrees and regulations were issued by or in the name of the sovereign and citizens were expected to obey them (Claessen 1978:586). Disobedience had consequences. The management of state affairs was done by the bureaucracy comprising officials, priests, nobles, etc. (Cohen 1978:35). The monarch performed the functions of both the legislature and the judiciary. In reality lawgiving and the enforcement of laws are quite complex processes and one always finds informal influences on lawgiving. Codified laws and formal judges were found in some, but not all, of the early states. The maintenance of law and order seems to have been based more on authority, and much less on force (Claessen 1978:587).

### **2.3.3 Position of the ruler**

The monarch was the very pivot of the early state and was in many cases identified with the state (Skalnik 1978:614). In almost all studies of the early state, the basic characteristic of the monarch is his sacral status. He was believed to be connected with the supernatural, and as such he was elevated high above his people. He mediates between the living and the dead for the welfare of the realm and to do this, he sometimes performed rituals, and in some cases he was a high priest who offered offerings on behalf of his people. Genealogies in the early states had an important functional role to play. In most cases, they were mentioned not only in connection with the assumed divine origin of the monarch, but also in prescribing the relationship among the social classes, thus in a way rationalising the prevailing social order (Claessen 1978:557). The health and well-being of the king is connected to the fertility of the land and the domestic animals. The monarch is also the guarantor of natural order. The sovereign was thought to be endowed with supernatural powers, and thus that the functioning of the society depended on him (Skalnik 1978:606). He protects his people against evil forces and other misfortunes, such as witches, diseases, poverty and anarchy. The ruler's benevolence was shown by the gifts he presented to his subjects. The kings of early states usually rewarded their brave soldiers with honorific titles and parcels of land (Kurtz 1981:193). The relationship between the ruler and his subjects was seen as a reciprocal one in which the people supplied food, goods and services to the ruler, who in return provided protection from foreign aggression, misfortune and natural disasters.

### **2.3.4 Independence**

The early states were independent, which means that they were not answerable or subordinate to other states or monarchs (Claessen 1978:539). However, they could be conquered and occupied by another state for some time. The early state had enough power to put down separatist tendencies and prevent fission, as well as the capacity to defend itself from external aggressors. The monarch was the supreme commander of the military and as such a protector of his people. A close connection often existed between the king and the military. The king acted either as a military leader himself, or appointed a member of his family or a close ally as leader of the army. As the centre of the state, the king was protected by a bodyguard. A standing army was also a key feature of the early state. The king's subjects were obliged to

perform military service. The early state monopolised the legal use of physical force and ensured that no persons, or groups, other than those authorised by the king or his appointees, resorted to physical force for the pursuit of their individual goals (Skalnik 1978:608). All military power was deployed in the name of the king, and consequently in that of the state (Skalnik 1978:608).

### **2.3.5 Territory**

Every early state made a claim to a certain territory. Isaac Schapera (cited in Claessen 1978:537) notes that every corporate social group in fact had a territory that it called its own. The people residing in the early states were considered as subjects of those states. Each of these territories was occupied by people from different tribes and clans who recognised the presence of some sort of political unity extending to the boundaries of that territory (Claessen 1978:537). In most of the cases there were natural frontiers delimiting the territory. However, the concept of territory in ancient times appears to have been rather vague, and embraced the relationship between the population and its territory. It can be noted how in most early states the rule over a particular territory is closely related to the rule over the people living in it (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:18). Claessen and Skalnik (1978:18) point out that the concept of territory seems to cover something more than just a piece of land on which people live. The early state extended its sway over people who either had residence, or had been born in its territory (Claessen and Skalnik 1978:18). People seem to belong to a state by the mere fact of being born, or permanently residing in its territory (Claessen 1978:586). As the state grew, it became multi-ethnic as it absorbed peoples from other ethnic groups. Some ethnic groups and their territories could change from one state to another in the event of conquest. Thus citizenship of a particular state could be acquired or lost. At times these ethnic groups could have a semi-separate existence within the state, loosely tied to it and to the central governmental. The ethnic groups that made up the state were each associated with a particular locality.

### **2.3.6 Population**

For a polity to qualify to be a state, it had to have big enough a population to make possible social categorisation, stratification and specialisation. Claessen (1978:586) notes that this appears to be too vague as a criterion, as earlier non-state polities can such a population and in its place he proposes population density as a criterion. Case studies indeed confirm that all

early states had a higher population density than non-states under similar conditions. The challenge would be to give even the vaguest estimate of the minimum number of people that a polity would need to qualify to be called a state. Joseph B. Birdsell (1973) suggests 500 as the minimum number of people needed for a state to exist, adding that as soon as that number is exceeded, a government based on face-to-face relations only will no longer be possible, and some form of organisation will become necessary unless fission takes place.

### **2.3.7 Legitimation**

A key aspect of the early state's survival and continued existence is legitimacy. Legitimation is the process by which the office of head of state and the state bureaucracy acquire support, either directly or indirectly through acquiescence (Kurtz 1978:182). The early state is a fusion of structural oppositions which has not yet completely subverted local sources of solidarity and allegiance (Cohen cited in Kurtz 1978:170). These local sources of power, such as kinship groups, are a threat to the survival of the fragile early state because it has not yet justified to its members, especially influential members of the pre-state era who have lost their influence as a result of the formation of the state. For this reason, the early state must work vigorously to attain it by attempting to shift the allegiance of its citizen from the local to the state. To this end, it quickly moves to take over some of the functions and roles that used to be performed by tribal leaders, such as education of children, regulation of marriage and military conscription.

The state needs the support of the majority of the citizens if it is to be governable and keep the parts together. As soon as the state is established, it uses a number of tactics to acquire enough power to enable it to survive. It will develop a system of laws to justify its existence and its actions. Thus the law is very crucial for the attainment of legitimacy. This political-legal structure is then saturated with divine sanctity derived from its religion (Kurtz 1978:170). With these apparatus in place, the rulers embark on a program of political socialisation which involves benevolence, control of information and terror (Kurtz 1978:170). The process to attain sufficient legitimacy as to avoid the blatant use of force is a long process which may entail the creation of a new ideology and value system and the mobilisation of all state institutions and the population in the service of their survival (Kurtz 1978:182). Marc J. Swartz (cited in Kurtz 1978:182) argues that a political system that is based on either coercion only or on consensus only is a myth because states will always

employ a combination of both, for the state must be at once both feared and loved. Claessen and Skalnik (1978:633) doubt that the survival of the early state depended primarily on force, arguing that legitimacy on the basis of consensus and the pursuit of a balance of power policy seems to have been decisive. Donald V. Kurtz (1981:183) adds that its survival depended largely upon the skill by which the rulers used their power to appease and pacify the populace.

The role and power of religion was crucial for the survival and continued existence of the early state. Religion validates the authority and power of the ruling class and its right to act (Kurtz 1978:186). By creating a myth of the origin of the royal house, which was sometimes “improved” on in the course of the state's existence, the foundation for a state religion was laid (Skalnik 1978:606). The state would develop a theology to support its authority, giving it a legitimacy that is omnipotent and supernatural. Values and ideology propounded by the state machinery are disseminated through propaganda and a variety of media - education, state rituals and ceremonies, etc. to attain the “consent of the governed” (Kurtz 1978:187). Religious officials play a leading role in popularising the state ideology. The state religion gives a sacred quality to the state saturating it with sanctity. Real and legendary heroes who embody state values are created from the distant past and myths and legends extolling their virtues in support of state values and ideology are disseminated (Kurtz 1978:186).

Even with regards to state benevolence, Wittfogel (cited in Kurtz 1978:186) suggests that state policies which outwardly appear to benefit the people actually cannot be considered benevolent. Any benevolence by state functionaries is designed as part of this process to explicitly maintain the power and prosperity of the ruling class. State benefits, such as food distribution during drought, serve to demonstrate the power of the state and implant in the citizens a sense of dependence on it (Kurtz 1981:193). They are a subtle aspect of the socialisation process that shifts the allegiance of the citizen to the state.

## ***2.4 Conclusion***

In this chapter we have examined theories on the origins of the early state. We have also looked at the types of the early state as well as the important characteristics of the early state. We believe that sufficient basis has been laid upon which one begins to understand the Israelite “state” as an early state. It is important to emphasise that in spite of the fact that we

were generalising, and that we are well aware that the historical process in each individual state was unique, we believe, however, that it is possible to discern a number of general patterns, in the total range of historical processes. This enables us to locate the early state more firmly within the general framework of the evolution of human society. In the next chapter, focus is on monarchic Israel as an early state.



## **CHAPTER THREE: RISE OF THE ISRAELITE STATE**

### ***3.0 Introduction***

In the previous Chapter, we discussed at length the emergence of the state as a form of socio-political organisation some five thousand years ago. Through a comparative analysis of the state in different geographical areas and of various historical epochs, we argued that there is no single cause for the emergence of a state. Rather, we suggested a multiplicity of causes in varying combinations. We also saw that the early state passed through three stages, namely, the inchoate, typical and transitional.

Having laid this foundation, in this chapter we look at the Late Bronze ancient Near East and attempt to ascertain the cause of the demise of the regional superpowers and breakdown of the city-state system during that period. We also discuss the emergence of tribal Israel, more specifically, how and where the inhabitants of the new settlements of the hill country came from. It would be proper to expose the political economy of these people before they form a state. This will lay the foundation for the discussion on the political economy of monarchic Israel in the next chapter. A discussion that is also important in this chapter, is that of the place of Israel in the ancient Near East - was she one like the other states or she was among them but not like them? The chapter will conclude with a possible determination of the factors that led to the rise of the ancient Israelite state. In this chapter, Marxist analytical categories begin to feature.

### ***3.1 Emergence of the ancient Near Eastern state***

Ancient Near Eastern politics cover a massive period extending over nearly three thousand years, from the so-called dawn of civilisation all the way to the Hellenistic era. The history of the Ancient Near Eastern state forms half of all recorded history, about 2 500 years. Over this long period, numerous centralised polities arose from Mesopotamia and Egypt, to the Syro-Palestinian corridor, to Anatolia, and also to Iran and Greek Macedonia. It is in this region that Egypt and Mesopotamia, the two most known of the few locations in the world where pristine states emerged. From the valleys of the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates rivers, the state system spread over the vast ancient Near East, partly by conquest and partly by imitation (Gottwald 2001:113). Before the emergence of the state as a form of socio-political organisation, autonomous small-scale societies had ordered themselves in non-hierarchic

forms for many millennia. Unlike the pristine states of Egypt and Mesopotamia whose existence owed to big rivers, the secondary states that emerged later all over the region depended on rainfall agriculture.

As everywhere else, the exact moment and circumstances in which pre-state societies in Egypt and Mesopotamia crossed the threshold into the state form remain a mystery. As we saw in the previous chapter, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to give definitive answers to questions of the sequences of events that led to the emergence of the state or to isolate a single factor that triggered this chain of events. It seems there was a cluster of factors that may have worked in varying combinations, from situation to situation (Gottwald 2001:115). A handicap to our knowledge about the emergence and triumph of the ancient Near Eastern state is that the state had a monopoly on writing and all that we know is from the perspective of the rulers, so that very little is written about the criticisms and organised opposition of the ruled (Gottwald 2001:116). Almost nothing is written about the individual and groups that opposed the state and about the alternatives they may have suggested and even tried to implement. The exception would be the glimpses provided by the Old Testament on pre-state Israelite resistance to centralised political system. We may assume that such resistance to statehood was a common feature of ancient Near Eastern politics.

Under the influence of the evolutionary hypothesis, research prior to the latter part of the twentieth century tended to view the move to statehood as natural and inevitable. Modern scholarship has since disproved that notion. Research suggests that the move towards statehood and the consolidation of centralised organisation was not that smooth and that some societies did not follow the evolutionary course. Quite the contrary, there were devolutions, interruptions and detours in many societies. Some societies were on the brink of statehood but they failed to consolidate the state system and reverted to decentralisation. Furthermore, the late appearance of the state in human history that extends millennia seems to argue against the inevitability of the state. If it were natural and inevitable, the state surely ought to have emerged thousands of years before it finally did. Moreover, when it finally did, it was only in a handful of places. If its existence were natural and inevitable, we would have expected it to emerge in numerous places.

The fact that the state emerged in some societies and did not emerge in others seems to suggest that the “state generating environment” was ripe in the cases in which it emerged. It might be possible to identify some of the state-generating factors. The social environment in which the state appeared displayed density of population, concentrations of agrarian and natural resources, and complex social organisational patterns that hierarchic control could attempt to coordinate and dominate with a growing measure of success (Gottwald 2001:119). Once entrenched, the state was so powerful as to invade and replace decentralised forms of socio-political organisation and, once embarked on, could not easily be reversed or modified. Where a state was emerging, the rulers who were implementing it and the ruled did not know where the new system was taking them because they did not have a pre-established model on which to base their experiment. Gottwald (2001:119) suggests that in this case we should think in terms of "incremental" or "creeping" statism. In Egypt, statehood seems to have taken place incrementally rather than in a single stroke with the unification proceeding from the south to the north (Gottwald 2001:128).

In our discussion on the general theory of state origins, we were warming to a combination of the warfare and/or conquest and social class theories as having greater cogency in explaining the emergence of states. To recap, a combination of the warfare and conquest hypotheses hold that warfare results in the victorious people dominating the defeated, and the outstanding members of the military who would have brought about victory at the battlefield become the rulers of the nascent state. According to Gottwald (2001:116), the grain of truth in a combination of these theories is that once militaristic states exist, non-state peoples are exposed to conquest and, to avoid it, they are tempted to adopt a centralised polity to counter the states that threaten them. The granting of kinship to Saul after the victory in battle seems to confirm that a charismatic leader who gives them victory is given power to establish permanent political power.

The class-struggle hypothesis maintains that a group within the community who had personally appropriated communal property, or who were aspiring to do so instituted the state to legitimate and defend their project of self-aggrandisement (Gottwald 2001:115). The merit of its claim is that the state as an organisational structure, involving an executive head and an administrative bureaucracy, depends upon the support of a privileged stratum of the populace whose favoured position is protected and reinforced by centralised authority and power in a kind of synergistic cycle that aims at self-perpetuation (Gottwald 2001:116). The elites will

gladly welcome a centralised political system since it will guarantee the security of their wealth and persons. Furthermore, political power will give them access to more resources. Taken together, these three theories suggest a fusion of force and persuasion that enabled some members of a society, in which all shared in approximate benefits of production, to separate themselves sufficiently from prevailing communal norms and practices to take command of a surplus of authority and power that successfully transcended and subordinated the dispersed “lesser” authorities of society at large (Gottwald 2001:118). We will apply these theories to the emergence of the Israelite state.

### ***3.2 City-state as ancient Near Eastern state***

A close analysis of the state in the ancient Near East will reveal that there were two types of state that appear to have been associated with that period: city-state and territorial state. It is important at this stage to briefly look at the city-state as a form of ancient Near Eastern state and see to what extent it was similar to and differed from territorial state. According to Bruce G. Trigger (2003:92), a city-state was comparatively small, consisting of a single urban primary centre surrounded by agricultural land containing smaller units of settlement. City-states were generally small both geographically and demographically, and it seems that all the elites knew one another personally (Trigger 2003:103). In contrast, territorial states were larger in size and were governed through a multilevel hierarchy of provincial and local administrators. Large territorial states sometimes had a number of large cities and the administrative city could move from one to the next. The difference between these two, Trigger (2003:92) argues, is not just the size of territories but also the nature of their urban centres and in their economic and political organisation.

Contrary to theorists who see a unilinear evolution in which city-states and territorial states constitute successive stages in the development of larger and more complex polities, Trigger (2003:92) views these as alternative forms of political organisation. Joyce Marcus (cited in Trigger 2003:93) argues that the first states to appear were territorial states, which later broke apart to into clusters of city-states. In her view it was unlikely that a group of chiefdoms could evolve directly into city-states. The persistence of both types for long periods in various places seems to suggest that both types of state are alternatives as opposed to stages in the development of more complex societies (Trigger 2003:93). City-states often differed in size and in concentration of their settlement. Rich and powerful ones grew very big both

geographically and demographically. Each polity usually had a centrally located capital city which provided protection against attacks from neighbouring city-states (Trigger 2003:99). In some of the larger and more populous city-states, the capitals were surrounded by smaller administrative centres and numerous subordinate farming villages. In city-states, cities were considerably more populous than those of territorial states. Most of the city-state population was concentrated in the main urban centres because of the greater protection they offered against intercity conflict. Cities were normally walled to protect citizens and property from attack. In an environment where warfare was rife, farming families lived in the main urban centres and worked land close to their communities (Trigger 2003:100). In fact most people lived full-time in cities and worked on the land during the day and went back to the urban area in the evening for the night.

Early city-states were usually adjacent, self-governing and formed in proximity to each other. There was economic and cultural interdependence among adjacent city-states. City-states were generally self-sufficient in food production. But for exotic raw materials, they depended on inter-city trade which also provided luxury goods and prestige items that were coveted by the elites (Trigger 2003:101). It was much easier for regional economies to emerge among smaller city-states that were very close to each other. There was economic, religious and cultural interdependence among city-states, especially as these related to upper class culture. As everywhere else in the region, the elites in neighbouring city-states tended to intermarry for strategic political and economic reasons. Warfare was a constant feature among city-states. It was waged over farming land, rights to water, and control over weaker states that were a source of tribute. City-state systems frequently produced “hegemonic city-states,” that is, one or more city-states that dominated their neighbours militarily and imposed tribute on their defeated neighbours, as well as making minor border adjustments (Trigger 2003:113, 125). Hegemonic states often grew richer and more powerful and their urban centres expanded as a result of the tribute from conquered city-states. There is no evidence, however, that hegemonic states interfered with the routine internal administration of conquered states (Trigger 2003:125). No matter how wealthy they grew, city-state rulers had much lesser surpluses at their disposal than did those of territorial states.

As a rule, the monarch was the head of state in each city-state. However, in some cases power was shared among different institutions and heads of leading families and conflicts seem to have been resolved in councils (Trigger 2003:103). It does appear that divine powers ascribed

to the monarch were less extensive as they were in territorial states and this seems to be explained by regular contact that the monarch had with his people. The more regular the contact was between the king and his people, the less divine the king was viewed by his subjects, and vice versa. The development of cities was strongly promoted by the elites who used them to pursue their personal and collective interests. Various specialised functions were concentrated in the city for the convenience of the upper classes. It gave them easy access to all the goods and services they required and enabled them to monitor specialised activities in ways that increased their power and well-being (Trigger 2003:122). The artisans also lived and worked in urban centres in order to be close to their elite clientele and to suppliers of the exotic raw materials. The presence of large numbers of artisans in a single urban community encouraged craft specialisation. In addition to palaces, major temples and markets were also located in the centres of cities.

A question that needs to be asked is how the city-state elites got their livelihood. It seems that they appropriated surpluses from their subjects – agricultural and pastoral, as well as from artisans and other skilled professionals - to sustain a privileged way of life for the monarch and the officials responsible for various roles in the state. City-states also participated in inter-city trade with each other. This was mostly trade in luxury goods that were coveted by the elite but were not manufactured locally. It seems to have brought substantial wealth for the power elite. Conquered city-states paid tribute to the hegemonic city-state. Though there are some differences between the city-state and territorial state as they appeared in the ancient Near East, we feel that their extraction of the surplus of the peasants and artisans, together with the trade with other such polities justify us in treating them together with the territorial state as the “ancient Near Eastern state”. Thus by “ancient Near Eastern state,” we refer to both or either of the two.

### ***3.3 Israel in the ancient Near East***

Earlier scholars tended to view the Israelite states as unique among the ancient Near Eastern states. They saw Yahweh religion as the reason behind the uniqueness of the Israelite socio-political life. Israel was a chosen nation and so Yahweh separated it from all the other nations of the earth, they argued. However, drawing on the rich reservoir of ancient Near Eastern studies, it can now be said with certainty that Israel was not unique among ancient Near Eastern states. The Israelite states of Israel and Judah were situated and fit in perfectly in

their ancient Near Eastern milieu. Their socio-political and economic structures and strategies were typical of their era and location. Israel's political experience was roughly parallel to that of her neighbours, so much so that Israelite and non-Israelite politics may be able to illuminate one another (Gottwald 2001:26). Philip F. Esler (2006:192) argues in the same vein that using social-scientific insights to investigate the ancient Israelite socio-political life shows that it was imbedded in the culture of the broader ancient Near East.

Israel was not one of the pristine states but was a secondary state that came on the scene after the state system was nearly two millennia old in the wider environment. As a late-emerging secondary state, it was an heir of statist socio-political organisation which it was exposed to during its formative years (Gottwald 2001:120). Because Israel always interacted with other states in its environment, and at times was dominated by them, we should understand the structures and strategies of those states as they formed a political matrix for the specifically Israelite political trajectory. Ancient Israelite politics is the politics of the ancient Near East. This is the slice of the "world-historical time" that provides the necessary perspective for viewing ancient Israelite politics (Gottwald 2001:113). Thus, to better understand the experience of Israel, it is important to view it within the wider context of contemporary Ancient Near Eastern cultures. Ancient Israelite politics is a subsection of the larger family of regional states. Without paying a blind eye to innovation, however, we can recognise many characteristics of Israelite society that were typical of other states in the region (Gottwald 2001:150).

Viewed in this ancient Near Eastern context, Israel and Judah were similar to other smaller states of Syria-Palestine and little differences aside, the political organisation of the states of the region was similar. Within the context of international politics, they were an insignificant player (Gottwald 2001:150). This is demonstrated by their recurrent defeat to major powers, such as Assyria, Egypt and Babylon. To compare Israel with her neighbours is not to stress how much or in what ways Israel might have "borrowed" from other nations of the region, or to attribute Israelite uniqueness to her religion. Rather, the purpose of the comparison is to understand Israelite life as only a part of the much broader ancient Near Eastern society. Where there are gaps in Israelite traditions, the knowledge from other Ancient Near Eastern states will cover up.

Geographically, Israel's location was both commercially and militarily significant. The major highways that connected the Nile and Tigris-Euphrates valleys, and those connecting South Arabia and the Mediterranean coast, passed through Palestine along a thin corridor between the sea and the desert (Gottwald 2001:150). On this land bridge, the regional powers met and clashed (Chaney 1996:146). Its location made it both a buffer zone for Egypt against foreign aggression and the staging area for Asiatic super powers to launch invasions of Egypt. Therefore, control over Israel was a major goal of the super powers seeking to control the interconnection of roads that met on the Syro-Palestinian corridor (Gottwald 2001:151-152).

### ***3.4 The ancient Near East in the Late Bronze Age (ca. 1550 - 1200 BCE)***

In the Late Bronze Age Levant, Cyprus and Mycenaean Greece, local societies were under city-states which put heavy burden of taxation and forced labour on the peasants. The small states of the Levant were generally under control of the Hittites or the Egyptians. But with the ushering in of the Iron 1 period (ca. 1200 BCE), the situation changed dramatically. The period witnessed the deterioration and demise of the major powers of the region. With the downfall of the Mycenaean world around 1200 BCE, Canaan was robbed of its most important trading partner (Kuhrt 1995:385). In Mycenaean Greece, the citadels suffered a decline and eventually destroyed and abandoned while in Cyprus too, there are signs of destruction round about 1200 BCE, followed by cultural changes (Kuhrt 1995:385). The Hittite Kingdom was obliterated round about 1200 BCE save for one or two of its subject kingdoms while Mesopotamia was split into the rival states of Kassite Babylonia, Assyria, and Mitanni (Kuhrt 1995:385). Around 1150 BCE, Egyptian supremacy over the southern Levant finally collapsed as it retreated from its Asiatic empire and by the early 11th century, it had withdrawn within to its narrowest frontiers, having lost control over Sinai and Nubia (Kuhrt 1995:385). Most Late Bronze Age cities in Syria-Palestine were destroyed around 1200 BCE. Ugarit was also destroyed around this time, and the site not reoccupied.

Excavations in many Late Bronze sites show a visible decline of urban population and general impoverishment of the population throughout the region during this period (Frick 1977:186). Documentation in Syria and Anatolia virtually ceases round about 1200 BCE and in Mesopotamia too, there is shrinkage in political power and prestige (Kuhrt 1995:394). It is not until the tenth century before there is evidence of real recovery in the region. A dark cloud seems to have descended on the entire region, and when the historical picture clears



again, a re-configuration of the politics of the region has taken place (Kuhrt 1995:386). The decline of an empire or the destruction of a city can easily be explained. But for a whole wide region to experience such dramatic change at about the same time, clearly suggests that there was a crisis. Trevor Bryce (2005:344) argues that the fact that this decline and destruction of the major centres of the region happened at about the same time seems to suggest a series of widespread upheavals and disasters, which led to, or helped precipitate, the downfall of the major centres in the region. What dynamics might have caused such wholesale change?

Traditionally, the upheavals and disasters have been attributed to the invasion of the mysterious “sea peoples”. Two Egyptian sources speak of the unbeatable sea peoples who conquer and plunder anyone and anything on their way (Kuhrt 1995:387). This description must be taken with a pinch of salt. The Egyptian kings might have been exaggerating the strength of the enemy to make their victory even sweeter. More recently the attribution of the destruction to the sea peoples has faltered. Kuhrt (1995:386) argues that the problem with the sea peoples revolves around their identity, that is, we can neither say who they were nor pinpoint where they came from. If we were able to establish their identity, then it could be possible to establish their movement. But if it is not possible to know who they were, then it is hard to see whence, where, how, when and why they moved (Kuhrt 1995:392). Furthermore, it is extremely difficult to establish evidence of an “invasion” of people from outside. Another factor that casts doubt on the “invasion” hypothesis is that except for Ugarit most of the major centres of the region either continued to exist in a diminished form or were quickly reoccupied (Joffe 2002:430). Moreover, nothing beyond two Egyptian sources suggests invasion or anything other than localised conflict as contributing to their deterioration and destruction (Joffe 2002:430). Itamar Singer (cited in Bryce 2005:343) argues that rather than emphasise the role of outside invaders, more weight should be given to the symptoms of inner decline and disintegration.

The contribution of invaders to disruption and collapse of these civilisations was limited. Rather, as Alexander H. Joffe (2002:429-430) argues, a plausible interpretation sees a variety of factors at work, including a collapse of affluent economies and international trade throughout the region, highly localised collapse of political and settlement systems, and both small and large-scale migrations and resettlement. Niels Peter Lemche (1996:116) adds that the crisis arose not so much because of internal structural problems in the small political communities of Syria and Palestine, but was rather occasioned by an international crisis

involving the great powers of the day. The migration of the sea peoples whoever they were, must be seen as a result of mounting economic problems caused by an over-extension of the political superstructures of the Late Bronze states which strained their resources to such an extent that they could easily be upset (Kuhrt 1995:392). In the final analysis what collapsed during this period was the international system and its interdependent network of local city-states (Joffe 2002:431).

The mode of production in the Late Bronze ancient Near Eastern city-states was clearly tributary. In this system, the upper classes appropriated the greater part of the surplus labour product of the lower classes. In such a situation of exploitation, wealth and power accrue disproportionately to those who are able to claim and dispose of what others produced (Gottwald 1993:4). The peasant populace on whose productivity the city-state elite depended, resented heavy taxation and forced labour imposed on them. Ruthlessly exploited and pushed to the brink, they rather formed and/or joined bands of pirates and brigands that moved in several directions at times wreaking havoc on the formerly wealthy, now tottering, city centres in order to survive (Kuhrt 1995:393). The movements and operations of these bands were, however, relatively small in scale and independent of each other. Runaway peasants and outlaws banding together to form marauding groups of bandits (the *apiru* of the Amarna letters) should be seen as symptomatic of an underlying, long-term socio-economic discontent (Kuhrt 1995:393). George E. Mendenhall (1962:73) has suggested that the Amarna letters represent a process of the “withdrawal”, not physically or geographically but politically of large population groups from any obligation to the existing political regimes, and therefore the renunciation of any protection from these states. If we insert the sea peoples into this political picture, then we can see them as another one of the signs of general collapse and disintegration, but not its cause (Kuhrt 1995:393). The sea peoples would then be only one of a number of pointers to a complicated series of interlinked problems and changes that had been developing for some considerable time. Ultimately, the cataclysmic upheavals must be sought inside the socio-political and economic structures of the region.

### ***3.5 Emergence of Israel***

With the collapse of Late Bronze empires and their economies, the waning of the closely connected city-state system and the demise of their hated tributary mode of production, a new phase of ancient Near Eastern political life emerges. The decline of the imperial powers gave opportunity for local populations to shift and reconfigure. The collapse permitted new identities and political systems to emerge and assert themselves. The various groups gained greater freedom of manoeuvre, favouring the development of an alternative political economy characterised by politically looser societies and polities with multi-power actors (Gottwald 2001:133). Local farming communities acquired greater autonomy, while industry and commerce were in the hands of “free-floating” artisans, merchants and nomadic traders. This development offered freedom of movement and enterprise and brought some relief from the burdensome tribute to the majority of people who laboured on the land.

Taking advantage of the political vacuum caused by the withdrawal of the once-mighty Egyptians and disintegration of the city-state system, a new entity called “Israel,” burst onto the scene, composed of people who do not appear to have been there earlier. The equally small polities of Ammon, Moab and Edom also arose on the mountains and plateaus of interior Palestine, and by 1000 BCE, most coastal sites were inhabited by the Philistines. Joffe (2002:426) calls these “ethnic states.” These, he argues, are not types or stages in an evolutionary scheme, but are novel and historically contingent political systems. What was the composition of this polity called “Israel” that gained control over the hill country and from where did its inhabitants come? What were the shared goals and bonding structures of Israel’s social system in comparison with those of other social system from which it emerged and against which it was counter-posed (Gottwald 1985:277)? Scholars are generally agreed that the hills of Palestine were sparsely populated during the Late Bronze Age when Egypt controlled the region. There is also agreement that during the subsequent Iron I period, many new settlements appear in the highlands, both in the Cisjordan and on the plateau of Transjordan. Where did these new settlers come from?

Three theories have been suggested with regards to the emergence of Israel. The first two are the conquest model and the immigration model. These have been exhaustively outlined elsewhere (cf. Vengeyi 2013; Gottwald 1985) and so will not be repeated here. It is Gottwald’s social revolution hypothesis which has cogency with Marxism, and which

includes aspects of the conquest and immigrations models, that we think better explains the emergence of Israel in Canaan.

From a Marxist perspective, stratified societies usually experience intense class struggles between the proletariat underclass (peasants) and the powerful bourgeoisie (upper classes), leading eventually to an underclass revolution (Sparks 2007:589). We suspect that this is what might have happened in Iron 1 Palestine. As noted above, Late Bronze Palestine had been a structure of city-states under Egyptian imperial domination, the dominant mode of production being tributary. The Egyptians had established military bases throughout the region and appointed Egyptian administrators to collect tribute from the native rulers who in turn passed on the burden to the peasants. It was, thus, a double layer of tribute extracting structures: the native rulers subordinate to the pharaohs and the native peasants immediately subordinate to their rulers and indirectly to the Egyptians (Gottwald 1979:212). Mendenhall (1962:203) describes a peasant as “one whose labour yields produce enjoyed by others” and adds that peasants were politically-economically marginal elements of society from whose produce the elite drew their life. The Egyptian presence in Palestine was a stabilising factor for the city-state elites for it kept the peasants in line and at the same time served as a guarantee of protection from other city-states. It also fostered a favourable climate for inter-city trade, so vital a factor in maintaining a high level of culture and luxury for the privileged upper classes (Gottwald 1979:394).

The withdrawal of the Egyptian imperial control did not do much to alleviate the plight of the peasants as taxation and forced labour continued. For the peasants it did not matter whether their surpluses were appropriated by Pharaoh or by the native city-state rulers; it was in either case an exaction that cost them and which they resented bitterly (Gottwald 1979:213). This expropriation caused outright dissatisfaction among the oppressed lower classes who had either to comply with their obligations to the local elites, rebel or flee. Rebellions against the exploitative city-states were quite frequent. Elites from other city-states often encouraged rebellion and chaos in neighbouring city-states because they saw an opportunity to weaken rival states and to seize control over their territory and resources (Gottwald 1979:398). The Amarna letters also record the internecine warfare of city-state against city-state. Rival rulers thus played upon the social unrest in their opponents' state and were ready to capitalise on the grievances of the peasants who suffered under heavy tribute (Gottwald 1979:398).

For those who could not take the exploitation anymore, “withdrawal” from the system was the only viable solution. This “withdrawal” was a declaration of independence from obligations imposed on villagers by the city-state elites and consequently a surrendering of the protection afforded by the city in favour of a reliance on the tribal system of defense (Frick 1997:99). Added to the equation were the *apiru*, who are depicted everywhere as having a negative stance toward the existing social and political structures and carry with them the aura of potential threat to the established order and seem ready to exploit any weaknesses in that order to their own advantage (Gottwald 1979:213). From the numerous texts available, the *apiru* have several connotations that range from robber, fugitive, refugee and rebels, who threaten the dominant order and specialise in guerrilla-like tactics (Vengeyi 2013:65). It should, however, be noted that the line between *apiru* as organised military and brigand bands, and the village agriculturalists and pastoralists was probably a rather indistinct one, becoming less and less distinct as central authority crumbled (Gottwald 1979:408). Obvious Vengeyi (2013:56) is even more emphatic arguing that contrary to the widely-held view that they were nomadic in nature, it is now conclusive that most of the people designated as *apiru* actually came from the sedentary population and not from among the nomads. He adds that they were not confined to one society of the ancient Near East. Rather, each society of the region that had this exploitative tributary mode of production *produced* its own *apiru*.

Vengeyi's description of the *apiru* is quite helpful in that it sees the *apiru* not as nomadic foreigners from some unidentified place of origin or from the desert fringes, but rather as exploited sedentary lower classes of the city-states who had withdrawn from their societies (at times even physically) and would later cooperate again with the authorities (or return for those who had physically left) should conditions in their homelands improve (Vengeyi 2013:57). In the meantime, some left their homelands to be labourers for wages in other states, including serving in foreign armies as mercenaries. Others turned to raiding the wealthy upper classes for survival. On their own, the *apiru* bands were not strong enough to unsettle the established order because they showed no signs of operating as a united force. They rather remained splintered in their support for various feudal states or factions (Gottwald 1979:406). Competing city-state elites hired *apiru* troops in their armies. As city-state power declined further, the *apiru* bands became an increasingly important power factor.

*Apiru* bands regularly multiplied in number as they were joined by streams of fugitives fleeing the city-states, to the hill country that was scarcely under city-state control. The peasants who gathered out of Israel to join David (1Sam 22:1) as freebooters indicate how an *apiru* group could recruit and assimilate large numbers of newcomers around a strong band leader (Gottwald 1979:406). The exodus group set foot in Palestine at this time of upheaval and “withdrawal” from the mainstream city-state controlled society by the heavily-taxed lower classes. Mendenhall (1962:79) argues that the exodus group was a very small group; possibly the biblical tradition of seventy families might not be too far from historical reality. It seems that prior to the arrival of this group, the *apiru* lacked class consciousness and a possibility of reorganising their socio-economic and political existence on non-feudal lines, something that could have been pivotal in replacing the status quo. Their prior resistance seems not to have reached the point of common intention of overthrowing the socio-economic and political set-up (Vengeyi 2013:65). That seems to have been one of the most significant contributions of the exodus group. The now autonomous former slaves, who had run away from the grip of the exploitative Egyptian empire presented an immediate appeal to the restless lower classes. Gottwald (1979:214) argues that what was attractive about this incoming group was the central feature of its religion, Yahwism, which celebrated the *actuality* of deliverance from socio-political bondage and promised continuing deliverance whenever Yahweh's autonomous people were threatened. In fact the very origin of Yahweh religion is inseparably connected with the process of historical and political liberation. Yahweh religion became the ideology that would motivate and mobilise the distinct groups in overthrowing the unjust system. Yahwism became a powerful catalyst in energising and guiding the broad coalition (Vengeyi 2013:74). Given their similar historical circumstances and a common vision for the future, the various groups naturally merged.

In contrast to the state religions of the ancient Near East which derive from earliest mythical times, Yahweh religion had a historical underpinning and did not, from the beginning, have the function of legitimating and stabilising the status quo (Albertz 1994:47). Rather, as the symbolic world of a social outsider group fighting for its right to life, it served to provide internal solidarity for this group and to detach it from a social order which they regarded as unjust, in the direction of a future social integration which made possible a freer and more equitable social life (Albertz 1994:47). While the ancient Near Eastern religions had a royal trajectory, in contrast Yahweh religion had a liberation trajectory. The royal trajectory speaks in myths of unity, speaks a language of continuity (royal institutions), appears to be fostered

by and valued among urban “haves” and tends to be socially conserving with a primary valuing of stability (Brueggemann 1993:215). In contrast, the liberation trajectory prefers to tell concrete stories of liberation, speaks a language of war and discontinuity, appears to be fostered by and valued among peasant “have nots”, tends to be socially revolutionary, focuses on the justice and righteousness of God's will (Brueggemann 1993:215).

A Marxist reading of the Bible is related to the liberation trajectory. Religion (ideology, as Gottwald calls it) is viewed as a social product, an intellectual construction whose real significance is in the economic and social relations (Bonino 1993:108). In other words, Israelite socio-economic relations had priority over Yahweh religion. However, Yahweh religion also had a crucial role to play, not simply as a legitimator, but as a “facilitator” of the egalitarian movement (Brueggemann 1993:215). Thus, Yahweh was a “function” of the egalitarian movement. Here we have a god who had proved his divinity in a liberation from state oppression and had bound himself exclusively to a group from the lower classes (Albertz 1994:77). He was a deity who was equally concerned both to deliver his people from tributary dominion to communitarian freedom and to prosper them in their struggle to extract a living from the highlands (Gottwald 1993:84). Naturally, he was going to be the god of the alliance. We may not be far from the truth in assuming that Yahweh was immediately seized by the other groups of the alliance as an invaluable reinforcement to their world of religious symbols (Albertz 1994:77).

The merging of the groups and the adoption of Yahwism as the religion of the coalition seem to have happened smoothly and without any hurdles because the former Egyptian forced labourers and the former marginal and lower class Canaanite peasants both had similar interests. They had both been freed from state-sponsored oppression and both were dreaming of a form of society that would enable them to live as freely and unencumbered as possible. If there was to be no church unity, neither side would tolerate church merger (Mendenhall 1962:79). The Israelite-Canaanite polarisation can be understood as a result of the shift in terminology. As soon as the Canaanite lower classes joined the alliance, Gottwald (1979:214) argues, they were no longer seen as Canaanites, but Israelites. Henceforth, he maintains, the term Canaanite was used to refer to the city-state oppressive structure, with its ideologically supportive Baal religion, which continued in the cities of the plains and whose culture tended to creep back into Israel as the first generation fervour subsided (Gottwald 1979:214). In the hill country and wilderness regions which were hardly under city-state control, whenever

they were strong enough, the coalition would fend off their oppressors and form tribal rule by elders in deliberate rejection of centralised political rule by kings (Gottwald 1979:214). Indeed while archaeological evidence suggests that the highlands of central Palestine - where the Israelites first settled - were thinly inhabited during the Late Bronze Age, there is an explosion of highland settlements around 1200 BCE (Sparks 2007:588, 589). It seems the Canaanite overlords in the tottering palaces of the plains were too weak to contain the revolt effectively in the hill country, and the coalition takeover went ahead with success.

From now on, the “exodus from Egypt” became a metaphor for all kinds of successful resistance to oppression by each of the different groups of this emerging polity on the highlands of Canaan. The Canaanite peasant “insiders”, in overthrowing or escaping from their city-state rulers had, like the “outsiders” from Egypt, overthrown their “pharaoh”, and they had been delivered in their own “exodus” (Gottwald 1985:287-288). Because the endpoint of the Yahwist (J) and Elohist (E) narratives (within traditional source critical terms) is the establishment of the nation of Israel, they visualise the Israelites of the exodus as embracing all the people of Israel whose descendants went on eventually to occupy Canaan (Gottwald 1993:276). Viewing the emergence of Israel in this way, one gets the picture that early Israel was a coalition made up of diverse groups: marginal Canaanite peasants, *apiru* mercenaries, tribally organised farmers and pastoral nomads, itinerant craftsmen, and the exodus group. Israel should not be understood as a group of geographical outsiders but as socio-political outsiders, who were only geographically present but not permitted to share in the shaping of their own destiny in the city-state ruled Canaan (Brueggemann 1993:203). Their marginality was socio-political and economic rather than geographical.

As Mendenhall (1962:87) notes, Israel was formed by an “intentional bond between persons in an intolerable situation,” oppressed people with an alternative vision of social order were able to reject the religious, economic, and political obligations to the city-states. In early Israel we see people in alliance against the tributary system attaining autonomy and carrying on their life so as to guarantee their livelihood, defend themselves against external aggressors, and keep themselves in good books with their new god Yahweh (Gottwald 1993:xxv). Together they won freedom over the city-states and developed an alternative counter-society that would enable them to live a life that they wished. In his peasant revolt model, Mendenhall (1962:73) argues strongly that there was no massive invasion of Palestine by outsiders, no genocide, no serious displacement of the population, no large scale driving



out of population, only of royal administrators, at the beginning of Iron 1 Israel. In fact Gottwald (1985:284) argues that the indigenous population of the Israelite coalition made up at least eighty percent of the coalition.

Mendenhall (cited in Brueggemann 1993:204) has suggested a rethinking of the notion of “tribe” with reference to early Israel, arguing that “tribe” is not to be understood as a natural ethnic grouping but as “an intentional community deliberately committed to a different ideology and a different social organisation” (Brueggemann 1993:204). Thus the tribes of Israel were historical, not natural. They did not come about because of necessity or nature, but through historical deliberate decision-making. The bond of relationship should be defined in sociological rather than biological terms (Frick 1977:198). Gottwald (2001:170) avers that what happened in early Israel was a “retribalisation” process which means that the settlers did not have a single pre-existent social organisation but developed their own by building on the kinship ties of various groups and improvising additional social networks as needed. However, if we propose as we have done, that the majority in the coalition were Canaanite peasants, then the concept of retribalisation might be difficult to maintain.

Gerhard Lenski’s research (cited in Gottwald 1993:41) has confirmed that this model of peasant unrest and revolt, culminating in revolutionary change has ample precedent in history. Studies of agrarian societies in both Europe and Asia have shown that peasants in these societies who were unhappy with their situation often blamed the upper classes and the discontent often led to violence, ranging from sporadic actions by individuals to widespread mass uprisings (Gottwald 1993:41).

### ***3.6 Pre-state Israel***

The overthrow of the Canaanite city-states went hand-in-hand with the collapse of their tributary mode of production. The coalition had to come up with an alternative mode. The social revolution produced what Gottwald (1993:xxv) calls a “communitarian” mode of production which was at odds with the tributary system, both in ideology and practice. Marshall D. Sahlins (1968:75) calls it the “domestic” or “familial” mode of production because of the strategic position assumed by individual households. Henceforth, we will call it the “familial” mode of production. The new mode of production renounced statehood and retained economic power in the hands of villagers. In charge of its own land and the

economic means of production, the community organised its own production, distribution and consumption. The producers were the same as the consumers who enjoyed the fruits of their onerous collective labour. Taxation and forced labour were completely eliminated. After they refused loyalty to the state system that taxed and conscripted them, they themselves endeavoured not to extract tribute from one another (Gottwald 1993:351). The idea of political power concentrated in one individual or a tiny group of elites, was out of the question. Having become independent, they were determined not to impose the same power-centred and status-centred society like the one they had escaped from (Mendenhall 1962:77). Thus the socio-political and economic system which this alliance developed was a counter-model to the city-state system. In short, it was anti-state.

The Old Testament narrative traditions about pre-state Israel retain (whatever their redactional history) a representation of a community among whom social power was broadly distributed in local settings. An essential feature of politics among this people is decentralisation and absence of any central political authority. Political functions were diffused throughout the social structure or focussed in temporary *ad hoc* role assignments (Gottwald 1985:286). The development of authority outside the household is extraordinarily weak. Permanent political institutions end at the local or at most at the tribal level. Primary leadership fell to tribal representatives. At its founding, Israel deliberately resisted specialised political offices. In times of crises, and existing arrangements unable to resolve it, military judges were chosen to command forces from the local community. Such appointments were temporary and would lapse once the crisis was over. The military leaders reverted to being ordinary citizens after overcoming the crisis. In a time of crisis, participation at a communal cause was voluntary and there was no power to compel a group or individuals to become involved (Albertz 1994:74). There was no compulsory recruitment into the army. Participants themselves had to agree to a military action. Mobilisation for participation in the army could not take place from above, only from below. In times of peace villages acted separately and independently of each other. This experiment was a form of democracy which at the end of the day depended on the consent of the people involved.

There are two political institutions that seem to have had roles in this community. These are זְקֵנִים (elders) and the אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר (men of the city) or a tribe (Albertz 1994:73). The former were heads of families and clans while the latter appear to be an assembly of legally free, economically independent men (Albertz 1994:73). In important issues, the אַנְשֵׁי הָעִיר had the

final say, for example in calling up an army (Judg 11:1), accepting strangers (Judg 19:22), or in matters of war and peace generally (1Sam 11:10). Social norms barred influential members of the community from appropriating the surplus of individual producers for personal gain or from creating a communal surplus fund that they could unilaterally impose and administer (Gottwald 2001:113).

The absence of central political institutions was not an inability to form them, but was an expression of a deliberate political concern. This coalition was premised on a deliberate political choice which was opposed to domination. Institutionalisation of political power was allowed only when the survival of the families was under threat, even then, it was only temporary. The aim of the coalition was to deliver a very high degree of freedom for its members. This also found expression in the name that the coalition gave itself. The name “Israel” (God or El rules), was a confession, that is, only God, not a human being, should rule. In a society in which members deliberately desist from a central political authority for the sake of their right to freedom and in so doing dissociate themselves from the monarchical structure of domination, such a name was very appropriate (Albertz 1994:76). The coalition wanted a type of society which made it possible for its members to live as freely as possible. This desire for freedom is also reflected in the type of god the coalition chose as its sole deity. The god El had been known to the Canaanite peasants as a symbol of their liberation movement and their opposition to domination (Albertz 1994:77). Given Yahweh's nature, as described above, we may not be far from the truth in supposing that Yahweh became fused with El, thus the god of Israel. Early Israel was an ecumenical faith, a catholic religion, whose purpose was to create unity among disparate groups and to deliver freedom to previously oppressed peoples (Mendenhall 1962:86). The recognition of Yahweh by the alliance members was from now on critical for the structure and functioning of the alliance.

Because of their histories, the nature of their deity and the *raison d'être* of this society, it is little wonder that there was no religious legitimation of political rule whatsoever. Because Yahweh himself was the ruler, he prohibited the establishment of any central political authority (Albertz 1994:78). Bound to a nonhuman overlord by covenant and the solidarity of the newly formed community, they set about fashioning a deliberate alternative social ordering (Brueggemann 1993:203). It is for the same reason that Israel, unlike Moab and Ammon, did not establish a monarchic state at an early stage, but continued in its

decentralised structure for two centuries (Albertz 1994:79). It is also against this background that Gideon's rejection of the crown should be understood:

I will not rule over you,  
neither shall my son rule over you:  
the lord shall rule over you (Judg 8:23).

Of course this statement may have been written with the later problems of the monarchy in mind but it indicates the connection which already existed in the tribal alliance between the exercise of divine lordship versus human lordship (Albertz 1994:78).

Another distinctive feature of the early Israelite society is lack of social stratification because of equally minimal economic and political differentiation. The alliance devised a whole host of social mechanisms for effective insulation against accumulation of political and economic power. Where influential members of society showed tendencies towards chieftainship or petty kingship, they were fiercely resisted (Gottwald 1985:287). Power was widely distributed and levelled in many groups and institutions so as to work against ambitious power and wealth seekers.

The **בֵּית אָב** was the basic economic unity which had its own inalienable **נַחֲלָה**. It produced the basic means of subsistence for its members and consumed all, or nearly all, of what it produced (Gottwald 1979:292). Surplus was used mainly for storage as guarantee against the devastating famines that might strike at any time. Although assigned to it, the piece of land did not "belong" to the household as such. It was handed down from generation to generation but it was never sold (Lev 25:34). The story of Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21), especially the fact that the king was willing to respect Naboth's **נַחֲלָה**, sheds light on the seriousness with which this system of land tenure was understood. Because the land belonged to the whole village and nobody had title to it, it was there for the sustenance of the whole village, hence the custom of allowing the needy, to sustain themselves by picking up ears and collecting grapes left behind by the harvesters (cf. Deut 23:24-25, 24:19-21; Lev 19:9-10). The **בֵּית אָב** was economically autonomous in the sense that it did not owe any of its produce to higher authorities in the form of taxes which had heavily burdened the subjects of the city-states (Gottwald 1979:292). The surplus labour product was not handed over to or shared with any centralised political apparatus. It was for the consumption of the family that produced it. Of

course there was an obligation to extend aid to another *בֵּית אָב* in need, but this was more a matter of reciprocal exchange than of commercial transaction.

Social security nets of mutual aid were revived and extended to the larger groupings. Solidarity was required of the members of the larger kinship group or close relatives if a family got into economic hardship. Whenever self-sufficiency of the *בֵּית אָב* was threatened, the *מִשְׁפָּחָה* stood by to offer relief. It was incumbent on Israelites to advance loans to needy *בֵּית אָבוֹת* without charging interest. Provisions for the socially vulnerable (widows, orphans, strangers) were insisted on. The name that the community gave itself referred not just to a religious community but to a self-determining society whose main concern was survival and a good life (Gottwald 1985:288). Mutual aid was intended to protect and prosper the loose alliance in the harsh climatic conditions and aggressive political forces. They also bonded together to maximise productive labour and to provide self-defence. The socio-economic relations were egalitarian in that every member was assured of equal access to resources by means of their organisation into extended families, clans and tribes (Gottwald 1985:285). The social relationships were structured according to a system of patrilinear kinship groups, real or fictitious (Albertz 1994:73).

Just as there was no central political institution, there was equally no central cultic institution. Contrary to Martin Noth, who argued for the existence of a central sanctuary, biblical traditions about pre-state Israel show a multiplicity of sanctuaries which existed side by side. Cultic autonomy and decentralisation went with political independence and decentralisation (Albertz 1994:83). The decentralisation of the cult brought it much closer to the people than was the later state religion in which Yahweh was hidden behind thick walls and curtains. Evidence points to the existence of a communal cult and a family cult in which the family worshiped its family god(s). Like the political and cultic institutions, the legal system was also decentralised. There is evidence of decentralisation and plurality. There was no central secular or religious authority which could have crafted legal norms or made binding legal decisions for the whole community (Albertz 1994:91). Local justice was in the hands of the *זִקְנִים* who applied customary law to cases involving community members. In such cases, they had an *ad hoc* meeting at the gate (hence “justice at the gate”) and tried to arbitrate between the parties involved. The verdict was purely arbitration and without executive force, it depended on being accepted by the parties involved. It does seem that where customary law could not settle the dispute there were people who were approached in difficult cases. These

included the judges, successful commanders like Jephthah (Judg 12:7) or those with charismatic gifts like Deborah (Judg 4:4f). It seems that these were respected and trusted members of the community who were probably regarded as incorruptible (Albertz 1994:91). For extremely serious cases, the elders and the popular assembly seem to have been responsible. They would constitute themselves a cultic community for a sacral judgment to condemn crimes worthy of death and to carry out the death penalty by stoning (cf. Josh 7:13ff; 1 Kings 21:9ff).

In concluding this section, we reiterate that the familial mode of production was consciously chosen by people who deliberately rejected centralisation of power and its exploitative tributary mode of production and created their own egalitarian society which would promote the ideals of freedom that the city-states had denied them. The traditions of liberation which the exodus group brought to the alliance contributed immensely towards directing the community towards enjoying a higher degree of freedom (Gottwald 1985:284).

### ***3.7 Rise of the Israelite state***

What sets the two Israelite states apart from the other nations of the region is that they detailed life in their pre-state society as well as the reasons that led to the formation of a monarchic state, which information is notoriously lacking in other ancient Near Eastern states (Gottwald 2001:152). Thus from these later accounts, we can attempt a historical reconstruction of pre-state Israel and what might have necessitated the move to statehood. What is also distinctive about Israel is that she enjoyed two hundred years of independent life without a state and the exaction of tribute that it later adopted with the evolution to statehood. For those two centuries, Israel sought to achieve the cultic, military, socio-economic, and jural coordination of a new society without recourse to the repressive and extractive institutions of central government and social stratification (Gottwald 1993:383).

But the experiment with this primitive form of democracy was not to last for ever. Israel soon found herself in a position where she had to reorganise her political economy and adopt a new mode of production. The way to go was the familiar territory, where she had been before and where the other nations around her were. Within about two centuries, the Israelite tribes had gone full circle. What necessitated this “return to Pharaoh”? Was it because the alternative mode of production that the tribes had opted for had inherent weaknesses that made it unworkable or it was being deliberately undermined by certain elements within the

society who had their own self-enriching agenda? Could it be that the honeymoon of independence from Egyptian and city-state oppression had ended with the early generations and that subsequent generations began to wake up to the reality that the alternative was not as effective as their ancestors had initially imagined? Or, was it because of external forces beyond its control? How is it that it had been able to hold the society together for such a fairly long time?

Earlier scholars, taking the biblical account as historical and relying on a single-factor explanation for state emergence, hypothesised that the formation of the monarchy in Israel goes back to the Philistines, who had become powerful on the coastal plain and were posing a serious threat to the highland settlements of Israel. Their iron weaponry and mobile strike force made them effective fighters (Gottwald 1985:319). The threat had become too strong for the voluntary tribal fighters of the coalition that they had been defeated many times by the well-organised and well-equipped Philistines in the course of which the Ark was captured and probably the cultic centre of Shiloh was destroyed (Albertz 1994:108). It became clear to the majority of the population that Israel had to radically transform her social organisation if it was to effectively deal with this threat. Saul, who had proved himself against the Ammonites, was given the opportunity to lead and defend the people as king (1Sam 11). Thus, according to this hypothesis, it was a *single external* factor that led the elders and the men of the city to seriously consider abandoning their resistance to a permanent central authority (Albertz 1994:108).

Rainer Albertz (1994:108) critiques this theory on the basis that it leaves unexplained why the state could still be accepted by parts, at least, of Israelite society beyond the time of the Philistine threat. More seriously, in our discussion on the emergence of the ancient Near Eastern state above, we dismissed single-factor explanations as inadequate. Though important, we argued that the military factor cannot be taken in isolation from other forces at work. We also cast serious doubt on the adequacy of external factors. We rather suggested that for a state to emerge there should be some “state-generating factors” in place and these are for the most part internal. In similar vein, Gottwald (1993:132) argues that a revolutionary institutional change, such as the transition from a tribal society to a monarchic state,

is prepared by internal as well as external factors and that such polities seldom, if ever, have arisen solely because of an external threat unless they are conquered outright and institutional changes crudely imposed, the internal factors prove crucial in shaping what changes will occur and how they are brought about.

If an external factor played any part, it was merely the “trigger” that hastened the formation of the state that had already been prepared for by internal factors that may not appear on the surface of reported events (Gottwald 2001:172-3).

Furthermore, the hypothesis that once Saul was chosen as military leader, an Israelite state would follow is fallacious. We have already dismissed the argument that it would be “natural” or “inevitable” for tribally organised societies and chiefdoms to evolve into states. There have been many instances in history of tribally-organised peoples uniting under a single military commander but without forming a state system. Like the appointment of the so-called “judges” in Israelite pre-state traditions, tribally-organised societies may choose charismatic leaders in the face of challenges and crises that cannot be resolved by existing social organisation (Gottwald 2001:173). Thus tribes are not steps to statehood. Quite the contrary, a well-balanced tribal system, even with a strong redistributive chiefdom, tends to resist the concentration of dispersed social power in state organs (Gottwald 2001:173). What then were those internal factors that brought about the “state-generating environment” in the tribally-organised Israel?

Land was the basic means of production in ancient Israel. The initial honeymoon period after the triumph of the coalition was characterised by relative social equality and each family seems to have secured its own piece of land. However, there were factors that were beyond the control of the alliance, such as the diversity of terrain, soil type and climatic conditions. Furthermore, drought, disease, inadequate labour force and ultimately deaths might have affected some families more than others. A combination of these negative factors may have resulted in some families falling behind others. Thus, while some families produced surpluses beyond their subsistence needs, others could not produce enough to feed themselves. In his conception of the “clientelistic” mode of production which he thinks was the dominant mode in monarchic Israel, Ronald A. Simkins (1999:125) disputes the notion that pre-state Israel was an egalitarian society, arguing that no known society has ever had a completely egalitarian social system. He further sees the assumption often made that the kinship relations



functioned to regulate and diminish social and economic inequalities as not supported by ethnographic studies (Simkins 1999:133). For him, egalitarian principles were in the ideological sphere, while the reality on the ground was characterised by social and economic differentiation even within extended kinship units. Studies also show that it is quite common for members of the same clan to exploit one another for personal gain.

Furthermore, although the ethic of the tribes of Yahweh was premised on providing mutual aid to families in need, the village or tribal system may not have been equal to the task of monitoring adherence to it. Even if it was possible, there was no way of coercing members to adhere to the ethic. There are indications that some wealthy men had become ambitious that they were tempted to use their wealth for patronage purposes. The noble vision of the coalition to achieve and maintain an approximate social equality among all its members was in danger of not being realised. Simkins (1999:135) maintains that as inequality intensified and with it the formation of patron-client relationships, the relations of production and distribution cut across kinship boundaries. Patrons and clients were now determined, not by kinship relations, but by control and access to needed material resources and only those who entered into patron-client relationships were able to benefit directly from them. One's loyalty and obligation were no longer with the kinsmen but with their patronage networks. Patronage placed kinsmen in competition with one another for access to resources and for control of large client bases (Simkins 1999:135).

It is quite probable that some wealthy men may have shown their ambitions to leadership of the tribal alliance. According to Gottwald (1993:132), there is evidence in the pre-state traditions of "outcroppings of elitism" that welcomed the monarchy as a way to strengthen and legitimate their privilege. Gale A. Yee (2003:32) agrees, adding that certain successful landowners were in favour of a state system because it would advance their interests. Gideon is offered the kingship (Judg 8:22-23) and his son Abimelech attempts to establish a petty kingdom based on Shechem (Judg 9). In fact, Frick (1977:116) argues that the traditions regarding the offer of kingship to Abimelech and Gideon may well have been a proposal to return Shechem to the city-state pattern of government with a local king. Nabal is pictured as a man of wealth in flocks and most probably agricultural holdings too (1 Sam 25:2-3, 8). It is quite probable that certain families and tribes were making claims to dominant social power based on their greater prosperity and enlarging regional influence (Gottwald 1993:133). According to Gary Stansell (2006:96), concerning the relation of wealth and power in an

agrarian society, the principle obtains that wealth could often be converted into political power. Due to fertile land and relative protection from political and military pressure, the Joseph tribes and Judah, seem to have prospered more than the tribes in Galilee and Transjordan (Ramantswana 2017) and consequently it is likely that the families of Saul and David (from the two regions) were wealthy families who saw control over the state apparatus as a way to consolidate and improve their position far more assuredly than under the tribal system (Gottwald 1993:133).

That David could gather a substantial number of followers during his period of banditry (1 Sam 22:1-2) suggests that economic inequality had already been entrenched in the tribal society. Moreover there are reports of abuses of priestly privileges by Eli's sons (1Sam 2:12-17) and of bribery and of perversion of justice by Samuel's sons (1Sam 8:1-3). The monopolisation of leadership positions by such families would cover up their abuses from public scrutiny. This seemed to frustrate the aim of the loose federation to achieve some degree of equality among its members. We can begin to see the function of a patronage system. The patronage system would benefit the leading and wealthy families of Judah and the Joseph tribes who could easily mobilise their clients for support.

These fissures may not have been deep enough in themselves to cause the transition from the tribal alliance to a state. However, the end of the shelf life of the tribal alliance began to approach with the movement of the Philistines into Israel, threatening the security and interests of the emerging economic elites and powerful families. With tighter military discipline, improved body armour, and a mix of weaponry and tactics better suited to mountainous warfare, the Philistines attacked Israel with the aim of laying claim to the grain-growing breadbasket of the highlands by subjecting Israel to vassal status (Gottwald 2001:175). The Ammonites and Moabites were also threatening Israel in Transjordan. Israel surely had to drastically transform her socio-political and military system if she was to effectively deal with the threat.

The “constant externally-driven rhythm of being a farmer one day and a soldier the next” (West 2011:4) was a great inconvenience to the men of means who were desperate to secure their wealth and increase productivity. However, because here is a society whose operating principle was freedom and thus opposed to any form of domination, especially by a political elite, we suggest that 1 Samuel 8 is indicative of serious contestation within the society as an

alternative political economy is being debated (West 2011:5). No doubt, the emerging economic elites who had amassed considerable wealth and the leading citizens, who had gained considerable influence in the tribal society, were at the forefront of advocating for an alternative socio-political and military set up which would protect their economic interests and position themselves at the heart of state power. In similar vein, Fried (1978:39) argues that it is this unequal access to resources that is the essential condition for the evolution of statehood. Those that have such access have to protect it. Thus, the state receives its key impetus from the need to protect the stratification system (Fried 1978:39).

It is not possible to say exactly at what point the tribal alliance crossed the threshold into a state and we do well not to think of the transition from the tribal society to state as an instantaneous and sweeping transformation but as an incremental development (Gottwald 1993:131). Marx reminds us of the slow and relentless grind of material conditions in bringing about change (West 2011:5). We, thus, argue for a slow and gradual introduction of state institutions. A protracted process of conflict and accommodation between central government and tribal society is proposed (Gottwald 1993:131). Rather than conceive of a “leap” into monarchy, it is more accurate to imagine state institutions as “creeping up” on Israel by increments (Gottwald 1993:134). This is consistent with the record in Samuel-Kings which shows a steady increase in the extension and consolidation of state power. Though the Saulide model of central political authority fell short of statehood, it was still compatible with the structure of tribal organisation and religious traditions of Israel (Albertz 1994:109). Saul’s permanent power base was limited to his modest residence in his home town of Gibeah (1 Sam 22:6), a small staff in which his relative Abner was the army commander (1 Sam 14:50f), and a limited army which was probably made up of his clients from his tribe of Benjamin and other nearby tribes (1 Sam 10:26; 14:52; 16:20f). Such a description fits perfectly what Claessen and Skolnik (1978) call inchoate early state.

But with David, the traditions show a form of central authority that was quite different from that of Saul. David is said to have established a state apparatus with its administrative centre at Jerusalem, thus setting the scene for a rapid build-up and consolidation of central political authority. According to Albertz (1994:110), that effectively made him a city-king of Jerusalem on the Canaanite model. He now has a capital city, unlike Saul who had a headquarters. We begin to see a sort of a bureaucracy in operation. The troops are now loyal to him, rather than to the tribes. He conducts a modest building program. The Davidic

monarchy could be what Claessen and Skalnik (1978) call the typical early state. The Solomonic monarchy as contained in the biblical record shows what Claessen and Skalnik (1978) call a transitional early state. The tribal decision-making structures and kinship influences were swept aside and relegated to marginal aspects of government. A full-fledged bureaucracy was in operation.

Thus these traditions show a slow adoption of state institutions. Putting aside historical questions, what the texts reveal is an incremental development of state power. There were many gradations in the movement from the incipient state to the full-scale state and many opportunities for arrested growth, retrogression, and collapse (Gottwald 2001:183). Instead of a jump to a state, the traditions imply eroding tribalism together with creeping or incremental statism (Gottwald 1993:174). Imagining a process of conflict and accommodation between state and tribe can enable us to understand many aspects of the Israelite monarchy. It is probable that it was in the military sphere that the state system won its quickest and most lasting victory when the tribal volunteer gangs and warriors were re-organised into a standing professional army, what Weber (cited in Gottwald 1993:135) calls the “demilitarisation of the peasantry.”

The preceding discussion has shown that the internal conditions of inequality had prepared the ground for the rise of the monarchy. These conditions of inequality had contributed significantly towards the making of the “state-generating environment.” They contributed to the fertilisation of the monarchic seedbed out of which the Israelite state arose. In fact, the rise of the monarchy presupposes significant inequalities across Israelite society. The Philistine threat only triggered a situation that was already ripe for the transition from the tribal society into a state. This explanation accords very well with Gottwald's military and social class theories for the rise of the Israelite state. The social classes within the tribal community who had appropriated communal property, or who were aspiring to do so favoured the establishment of a state to protect their wealth, legitimate and defend their project of self-aggrandisement. The military provided the occasion for the victorious community to grant political power to those of their members who had achieved military success (Gottwald 2001:118).

The weakness, however, of this theory and indeed many other theories on the rise of the state from a Marxist perspective is that of equating the ruling class with the state. In other words, it

leads to the conclusion that this concentration of power in the charismatic leader or in a small group is the development of the state (Boer 2007:37). Thus the exploiting class is the same as the state. Boer then attempts his own hypothesis highlighting the three nodes of what he calls the “sacred economy.” These are the village commune, the temple-city complex and the formation of the despotic state (Boer 2007:36). He argues that the state is not the same as the temple-city complex nor is it the same as the chieftain or despot and the small group of exploiters around him, rather, the state arises in the conflict between the social stratification between this group and the village commune (Boer 2007:37). The major contradiction existed between the village commune and the temple-city complex because of extractive economics, most notably in tribute. It is in this conflict that the Israelite state arose.

### ***3.8 Conclusion***

In this chapter, we have dismissed the notion of the uniqueness of ancient Israel. We argued that Israel fits in well in its ancient Near Eastern context. We also noted the upheavals that happened in the Late Bronze ancient Near East resulting in the disintegration of the great powers of the region and their civilisations. With this waning of their imperial influence small polities, such as Israel, Moab and Edom emerged. We argued that Israel emerged as a coalition of marginal groups of society that all had one concern, to live freely without the heavy taxation and forced labour and the institutions that were capable of imposing these burdens on them. Defeating the tributary mode of production, they introduced their own familial mode of production. We noted that egalitarianism would guide the coalition for the next two centuries. The bubble of freedom and egalitarianism was not going to last forever. Increasing social and economic inequality resulting from differential access to the means of production, among other factors, put a strain on the noble vision and, slowly but surely, the nation was on its way back to the tributary mode of production. It is predominantly the internal condition of social and economic inequality that slowly prepare the road to statehood. The external Philistine threat was but a trigger that precipitated state formation that had been prepared for by internal factors. The introduction of the state in ancient Israel meant a different political economy and a different mode of production. It meant a native tributary mode of production in which the power elite taxed and indebted their own people. In the next chapter, we focus on the political economy of monarchic Israel. We will attempt to determine to what extent that political economy can be labelled a “political economy of terror.”

## CHAPTER 4: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF MONARCHIC ISRAEL

### *4.0 Introduction*

The evolution from a decentralised socio-political organisation to a monarchic state gave rise to a new mode of production. The transition meant that political power would be vested in the hands of a single individual. Whereas decision-making in the old order was done by a collective, in the new dispensation such powers were monopolised by the monarch. Of course, he would not rule single-handedly but would be assisted by a whole host of bureaucrats and advisors. Since he and his staff claimed to be indispensable to the lives, peace and prosperity of their people, the same people were supposed to be grateful and in return take care of their rulers' needs. Unfortunately for the peasants, the rulers would not come cheap. From their meagre surpluses, the peasants were expected to pay various forms of taxes and provide labour as demanded by the rulers. The transition left the work relations of the majority of the villagers largely unchanged, but it laid a heavy burden of taxation and tribute on the fruits of their labour. To what extent were the peasants willing to hand over their decision-making powers to the monarch? More importantly, to what extent were they willing to hand over the fruits of their sweat to their rulers? What mechanisms were used by the rulers to extract the peasants' surpluses?

In this chapter, we look at the political economy of monarchic Israel, paying attention to the Marxist categories of mode of production (including relations and forces of production), class and ideology. We will also look at the concept of kingship and the role of the city in the political economy of the two Israels. We leave aside historical questions of whether they might have been a David, a Solomon, an Omri, a Jerusalem or a Samaria. Rather, through a social-scientific analysis of what statehood was like in the broader ancient Near Eastern environment of which ancient Israel was part, as well as glimpses from the prophetic critique of contemporary society, and attempts by reform movements to introduce legislation to right the wrongs of their society and regulate social relations, we can form a fairly accurate picture of the political economy of monarchic Israel. We will discuss the main features of that political economy to ascertain to what extent it can be labelled a "political economy of terror."

## ***4.1 Kingship and primacy of state power***

A chief feature of any state is the pre-eminence of state power. The ancient Israelite states were the most authoritative institutions within their societies, with powers to command and coordinate the functions and resources of the other spheres of society (Gottwald 2001:144-145). Political power radiated outward from the governing centre, which included the king himself, members of the royal family, chief officers and advisors, to the periphery. While symbolically the king stood above and represents the whole society, he was also the leader of the upper classes. Trigger (2003:147) argues that one of his most important functions was to unite that group and protect and promote its socio-political and economic interests. The states were monarchic bureaucracies in which supreme authority was vested in the person of the king rather than in some collective (Trigger 2003:71). These administrations were more “patrimonial” than “bureaucratic” in the sense that the officers did not serve an abstract “state” but were personal servants of the king. Likewise, Weber (cited in Schaefer-Lichtenberger 1996:86) notes that these ancient states can best be classified as patrimonial states. Patrimonial administration served primarily to provide for the king and his household (Schaefer-Lichtenberger 1996:86). Appointment to office depended on one’s relationship with the ruler, and the officials served at the pleasure of the ruler. Most of the highest and most crucial positions in the regime were occupied by sons and other close male relatives of the king.

Kingship in the ancient Near East was by-and-large hereditary. In some states, the custom was that the eldest son succeeded the father, but this was not always followed. In other states the incumbent chose his successor hoping that his choice would be respected. In Israel and Judah, there does not seem to have been an established rule on royal succession. Even if it may have been assumed that the eldest son should succeed the father, this did not prevent other pretenders from seizing the throne. Ambitious sons seem to have made efforts to convince the general population that they were the right candidate for the job (e.g. 2 Sam 15:1-6; I Kings 1:5). Usurpations by members of the broader royal family were also frequent. There were also other domestic power centres, such as merchants, landholders, priests and bureaucrats who had an interest on the throne. Usurpations often characterised the transition between kings as contending parties among the socio-political and economic elites jostled for control of state power and state resources. In ancient Near East, the death of a king was a highly critical moment. This is a time when several pretenders to the throne usually rose up

and fought until one triumphed. Aware of this, kings at times designated an heir to ensure a peaceful transition. Even then, conflict over the succession could still break out upon the king's death, with different factions of the power elite supporting rival candidates. To further ensure a peaceful succession, the ancient Near Eastern king sometimes installed his preferred heir as co-regent during his own lifetime. It does seem that Solomon was David's co-regent and was being groomed to take over the throne once David died (1 Kings 2:1; 1 Chr 23:1-2). Adonijah, aware of that and feeling that the throne was rightfully his, tried to impose himself upon the people (1 King 1:5). In some cases, the succession had to be sanctioned by a deity, whose will was determined by diviners. The role of Samuel in anointing kings (e.g. Saul in 1 Sam 10 and David in 1 Sam 16) and of a young prophet in anointing Jehu (2 Kings 9) seem to point in this direction. In other cases, decisions about succession were made either by representatives of the royal family or by powerful members of the upper class. Some kings were approved by popular approval. While in most states male monarchs were preferred, females however, occasionally ruled in others, usually during moments of crises, and in Egypt, their reigns were regarded as contrary to the normal order (Trigger 2003:74).

Ancient Near Eastern states were highly volatile and could easily break up into various parts. The division of the united Israelite kingdom following the accession of Rehoboam is suggestive of this volatility. In order to secure and hold political power, rulers had to wield a combination of both persuasion and force. Resorting to brute force alone could be counterproductive and suicidal, as the resultant dissatisfaction could lead to rebellion and the fall of a regime. The common assumption that ancient Near Eastern states were unadulterated "oriental despotisms" as Wittfogel (1957) suggested is problematic. To be sure, many states were more or less authoritarian but they were not totalitarian despotisms. It is doubtful that kings dominated their societies as totally as they boasted in their edicts and inscriptions, art, and architecture (Gottwald 2001:147). To the contrary, Skalnik (1978:610) argues that despotic traits developed in the ideological sphere rather than in actual reality, although they could be very marked in the latter as well. He adds that the lives of the peasants in the villages were hardly affected by the rulers, except for those living close to the court (Skalnik 1978:612). In some kingdoms, the monarch would on occasion travel around his kingdom and would that way reach many of his subjects. But once the royal entourage has left, life would resume its normal routine for the villagers. They would forget about the sovereign and he would also forget about them. On the other hand, we should be careful not to regard those



regimes in which councils or assemblies of leading citizens may have played a consultative role as “democracies.” They still exhibited authoritarian tendencies.

The king was regarded as responsible for the common good in his kingdom. His duties included ensuring prosperity of his realm, maintaining internal peace and order, defending his kingdom from foreign aggressors, settling disputes and managing relations with the deities (Trigger 2003:74). Maintaining domestic peace and order required ensuring that peasants remained acquiescent to the state, producing surpluses and paying obligatory taxes and rents. It also involved mediating and resolving conflicts among the elites that had a potential of threatening the unity of the fragile state. The king was also the commander-in-chief of the army. As the chief judge serving symbolically as the highest court of appeal, it was his responsibility to uphold justice in the kingdom (Gottwald 2001:178). It appears, however, that the actual administration of justice was done by judicial officers in the villages and towns.

The ancient Near Eastern king was the most important connection between humans and the deities on which the welfare of both society and the universe depended (Trigger 2003:79). The kings claimed close association with the deities, and in some cases, they were believed to have divine powers. For this reason, the monarchs were frequently ascribed divine or semi-divine status. In Egypt, kings claimed to be the earthly manifestation of the gods. This might be because of the massive size of the state which made direct contact between the ruler and the majority of his subjects very limited (Trigger 2003:79). In Israel, the relationship between the (Davidic) king and Yahweh quickly came to be considered a special one. The king was Yahweh's son (Ps 2:7; 2 Sam. 7:14), his first-born (Ps 89:27) and his anointed (Ps 2:2; 18:50; 20:6). Within the framework of Zion Theology, the Davidic king seemed to guarantee the security of his people and his land. He was regarded as the embodiment of the strength and vitality of his kingdom and according to Trigger (2003:79) this led to an emphasis on the health and vigour of the reigning monarch. In some states, kings claimed to be descendants of major gods. The enthronement ceremonies were believed to transform kings into intermediaries between humans and the gods. As individuals, kings remained human and mortal, but as incumbents of a sacred office they were set apart from all other humans as a result of having acquired unique supernatural powers (Trigger 2003:87). The setting apart from other human beings was not just abstract but was also demonstrated in the physical location of the king's palace right at the centre of the city, away from the commoners in the

periphery. Forming one complex with the palace was the temple which served as the personal chapel of the monarch. The palace-temple complex was right at the centre of the city and the splendour of the city was seen in the splendour of the palace-temple complex. It was in the city that both the power and piety of the king were evident.

## ***4.2 Mode of production in monarchic Israel***

In his modelling of the ancient Near Eastern economy, Boer (2007, 2015) describes it as “sacred economy” by which he means a system in which the economy operates and is understood in terms of the sacred rather than the political. He suggests “theoeconomics” as the economic logic behind the sacred economy (Boer 2007:39). What is most significant for this work are what he calls regimes of allocation and extraction. Allocative economic patterns depend on the allocation and reallocation of labour and the produce of labour, while extractive economic patterns refers to the appropriation of the produce of labour by those who do not work, the willing unemployed - the ruling classes and their hangers-on (Boer 2015:1). The regimes of allocation have been discussed with reference to pre-state Israel. This chapter is by-and-large devoted to the regimes of extraction.

The move from a tribal social organisation to a monarchy was a change from the dominance of a familial mode of production to that of the tributary mode of production. The tributary dislodged the familial mode of production and became the dominant mode throughout monarchic Israel. Scholars often think of the monarchy replacing tribalism except for survivals in religious beliefs and nostalgia for past social life (Gottwald 1993:135). The reality however, is that the state must adapt and come to terms with the continuing forms of socio-economic life among the peasants who have their own social practices (Gottwald 1993:135). Thus we can postulate a scenario of contestation and accommodation between state and tribe. One can safely say that the dominant familial mode of production of pre-state Israel did not die out with the introduction of the monarchy. The communitarian spirit, social relations and practice of early Israel continued to function in the monarchic era. Not even the strongest tributary state could successfully suppress communitarianism among its people in the villages. Gottwald (1993:xxvii) adds that the domination of the tributary mode of production in the ancient Near East was always an overlay on a communally oriented masses. Simkins (1999:134) adds that the new mode of production appropriated, and was transformed by, the earlier one. It is also true, however, that the rise of the tributary mode of production in

monarchic Israel stood in conflict with the earlier familial mode of production, which it eventually incorporated. The tributary mode had an upper hand but economic and political battles were waged all the time to try to reclaim communitarian ground lost to the upper classes (Gottwald 1993:345). It was dominated every now and then, yet reasserting itself once again. This is reflected, for example, in the social criticism of the prophets and by the formulations of reform movements.

While tributary was the dominant mode of production in monarchic Israel, it was in no way the sole mode in operation for it cannot account for all the production in that society. A number of subsidiary modes of production can also be seen in monarchic Israel. In fact, various modes of production can and do co-exist in a given society at any given time. Within any dominant mode of production other modes of production may co-exist as survivals or forerunners. Following this line, Poulantzas (cited in Jameson 1981:95) argues

every social formation or historically existing society has in fact consisted in the overlay and structural co-existence of *several* modes of production all at once, including vestiges and survivals of older modes of production...as well as anticipatory tendencies which are potentially inconsistent with the existing system but have not yet generated an autonomous space of their own (*italics in original*).

Thus, other subordinate modes of production were also functioning in monarchic Israel. Simkins (1999:134) for example, strongly argues that the dominant mode of production in monarchic Israel was what he calls the “clientelistic” mode of production based on patronage. Boer (2007:41) however, feels that it is far better understood as one element in a larger economic system, for patronage is also found in other economic systems. Mario Liverani (2005) suggests the “palace-temple” as the dominant mode of production in the ancient Near East including Israel. Roger S. Nam (2012:141) observes that the temple economy in Jerusalem stood in the tradition of ancient Near Eastern temple economies which collected foods and received tribute, had cultic priests and personnel to support them. However, while the palace-temple might have been dominant in Mesopotamia and Egypt because of their massive institutions and large populations, in Israel it was most certainly a subordinate mode which was not large enough to dominate the other modes of production (Simkins 1999:139). Even in those pristine states of Mesopotamia and Egypt, Igor Diakonoff (cited in Liverani

2005:49) argued that that the temple properties covered only a part of the city's entire territory, leaving the rest of the territory in the hands of subsistence agriculturalists.

The “trade-tribute” mode of production has also been suggested for ancient monarchic Israel. This mode comprises the appropriation of all external sources of wealth whether from long-distance trade, tribute from military conquests, or taxes on transit trade (Simkins 1999:139). John Holladay (1998:383-386), for example, argues that the transit trade out of the Arabian Desert contributed considerably to the Jerusalem fiscus. Taking the realities of ancient Israel, trade-tribute does not seem to have been prominent. David Hopkins (1996:136-38) questions both the extent of Judah's control of and the income generated by this trade, at least in the early monarchic years. Boer (2007:42) argues that trade, in the absence of a market economy (as was the case in ancient Israel), was a tiny part of the total economy. Trade in ancient Israel was a very limited exchange of luxury goods among a small ruling classes facilitated by merchants, and a limited exchange of basic goods among the peasants. He adds that the appearance of an odd merchant or two or the bartering of a sheep for a couple of leeks does not make for a market economy (Boer 2007:42, 43). Writing about transit trade, Moshe Elat (cited in Chaney 1993:253) notes that while it paid dividends for the monarch, its influence on the economy of Israel was limited. Thus we can safely say that trade-tribute functioned to complement other modes of production.

### ***4.3 Class in monarchic Israel***

Another key Marxist analytic category that can help us understand the political economy of monarchic Israel is that of social class. According to Gottwald (1993:4) social classes exist whenever one social group is able to appropriate the surplus labour product of other groups. Using this definition, we can identify two broad social classes in monarchic Israel: an upper class made up of the political elite and their professionals (administrative, religious, and military officials) as well as the large landholders and merchants. This is the dominant surplus appropriating class. The second is a lower class comprising of peasant farmers, artisans, priests, unskilled workers and slaves. These constituted the dominated tribute-bearing class. The former is a class of producers while the latter does not produce but leaves off the labour of the former. The relationship between the two classes was one of domination and exploitation with the result that wealth and power accrued disproportionately. The upper

class can further be subdivided into two: the ruling class and a slightly lower layer of lower officials and artisans.

In early states, socio-economic inequality was never questioned. According to Trigger (2003:142), egalitarianism was a feature of despised marginal and peripheral societies, such as pre-state Israel. Inequality was viewed as a normal condition. Virtually every aspect of the social structure - family, economy, religion, education - was based on differential power. Membership of a class was determined primarily by birth even though it could also be determined by royal or upper class recognition (Trigger 2003:165). Every child was born into and socialised by a family that belonged to a certain social class and was therefore aware of his social position in relation other classes. Obedience to those above one's rung on the ladder of social recognition was reinforced in the home and in social life. Every child knew where exactly he belonged on the social ladder and interacted with those of similar rank. Ideas of inequality and obedience to authority were inculcated right from early childhood. The social structure in ancient Israel was so rigid as attested by little upward social movement. That one elite family would continue in an influential position for generations is one indication of this handicap toward upward social mobility (Sjoberg 1960:137). The belief was that a person was innately superior because he was born into a family that had the right to rule. Biological superiority sets the upper classes apart as unchallengeable and their actions and decisions are not to be questioned.

The rigidity was also seen in the lower classes' unquestioning acceptance of the status quo. It seemed a given that the elite were the sole determiners of what is right and good for a society. In their never-ending struggle for survival, the peasant classes had no time to seek to change the oppressive system and so resign to its lot. The lower classes seemed to accept the status quo so that the society would continue unchanged for a long time. Where the primary concern of the majority was mere survival, the prospects of change were not promising. The idea that the lower classes were capable of making meaningful judgements on the social discourse was uncommon. The reality of power was to be protected from challenge by the lower classes and these were not supposed to have access to the symbols of power.

The institution of marriage played a crucial role in reinforcing the existing social class structure. Marriage in ancient Israel, as in the rest of the ancient Near East, was a family affair. It was an arrangement between the families, rather than a union of two souls (Sjoberg

1960:146). It was primarily for the benefit of the two families rather than for the pleasure of the two individuals involved. The reputation and position of the family in the community were associated with and enhanced by the marriage partners it secured for its children. The family was the main actor because the name and position of the entire kin group were at stake. Parental control over the marriage process helps to stabilise the society's class system (Sjoberg 1960:146). The elites tended to marry people of similar status and it seems marriages with members of the lower classes were considered inappropriate (Trigger 2003:162). High-level diplomatic marriages to reinforce political alliances in line with the principle of benefit to the family, rather than the individual, were a staple of ancient Near Eastern politics (Gottwald 2001:181). King Ahab's marriage to Jezebel and King Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter ought to be understood against this background. The upper classes married their children to high-ranking administrative and military officials for their support. Thus marriage was a way developing networks that united the upper classes against the commoners. This also had a consequence of restricting vertical social mobility. One of the roles of the larger kinship group was to keep alive ties - real or imaginary - with the past, which ties reinforced the family's status. The crafting of genealogies was of fundamental importance for the execution of that role. By appealing to powerful ancestors, the authority of the family was legitimised and families could justify their claim to present superiority on the basis of their ancestors' eminence (Sjoberg 1960:161). By implication, other families ought to acknowledge their superiority and their right to rule.

Class was also evident at religious festivals. These also served as a vehicle to highlight the significance and indispensability of the ruling classes. Certain religious festivals required the participation or at least the presence of large numbers of people. These public rituals were not innocent religious assemblies. Trigger (2003:521) argues that apart from serving to reinforce the collective identity of society, they also served to reaffirm the hierarchical organisation of the state by stressing the key role that the upper classes played in representing society as a whole in its relations with the supernatural. The legal system also functioned to reinforce the power and privileges of the ruling elite and to put the lower classes in their real position. The control of the justice system by the elites meant that poor peasants are less likely to get justice. While the legal system had to be protected from being discredited as a result of obvious corruption and abuses, it functioned, behind claims of impartiality, as a not very subtle instrument of intimidation and control in the hands of the upper classes (Trigger 2003:238).

#### ***4.4 Regimes of extraction***

The exercise of power in the ancient Near East, as anywhere else, also entailed having centralised control of the economy. The key political decision making powers over the use of the land (the major means of production in an agrarian society) and distribution of the surplus was vested in the monarch. In reality this meant taxing powers without which the ruling classes could not have prospered. Extractive economic patterns function to enable non-producers to extract produce from producers. In technical Marxist terminology, this living off the labour product of others is called “exploitation” (Gottwald 1993:147). Someone else appropriates the value of a labourers’ excess production. This labour product beyond the subsistence needs of the labourer is called “surplus product” which is also “surplus value.” Through taxation, the exploiters exact the labour product of the producer, thereby denying him the use or exchange of that object (Gottwald 1993:147). Though the terms “tax” and “tribute” are often used interchangeably when dealing with wealth transfer, the two are different. Tax refers to the wealth transfers from individuals or groups to states while tribute refers to transfers between states (Trigger 2003:376). By calling it “tributary” mode of production in this work, the term tributary is taken to refer to the payment of all forms of taxes.

Wealth in early states such as Israel and Judah constituted of agricultural surpluses. The primary location of economic activity was not the city or palace but the village where the peasant toiled on the land, growing crops and keeping animals. The economy rested on a broad base of subsistence peasant farmers, estimated by Boer (2017:6) to have been about 90% of the population. The peasant was not an agricultural entrepreneur who produced for the market but for his family. Peasants carried out their daily activities needed to ensure a minimum level of subsistence and also practised, risk-reducing and forward-looking tactics that sought to ensure long-term survival of the kinship group (Boer 2015:54). Diversity in terms of the animals kept (cattle, goats and sheep) as well crops grown, was for the sake of survival in the face of threats of drought, pestilence or disease. It is the peasant surpluses that the ruling classes which controlled the state, expropriated from them through taxes, which had to be paid to the state. Boer (2015:153) cautions that we should not think of “surpluses” as if they were luxuries, over and above the needs of everyday life, without which one could easily live. In the ancient world there was no real “surplus” in the modern sense of the term. Rather these were marginal surpluses intended for risk aversion by the peasants who lived

just above the subsistence level. These surpluses were mainly tucked away for use when natural disasters struck as they sometimes did a couple of years in a row. The surpluses collected from each individual farmer might have been small, but multiplied across the kingdom, the total was considerable.

The dominant tribute-imposing classes consisted of the political elite - native and/or foreign - and their administrative, religious, and military officials, together with the landholding, merchant, and small manufacturing elites who were in close proximity to state power who extracted surplus from the peasant producers (Gottwald 1993:6). When Israel and Judah still enjoyed statehood, it was the domestic elite that expropriated the peasants' surpluses. But with the defeat of the two kingdoms, their rulers also had to pay huge amounts in tribute to the foreign rulers which had to be sucked out of the peasants (2 Kings 15:19-20; 18:14-15; 23:33-35). For the peasants, imperial domination of their states meant that they were now subjected to double taxation: by the foreign rulers and by the native elites.

The land in early states such as Israel was not "owned" by the peasant farmers as such even though individual peasant households possessed and used it. It was owned by the state. The villagers had "use ownership." The state's ownership gave it rights to collect tax-rent for its use (Simkins 1999:130). Through these taxes, the state frequently intruded into the peasant households and expropriated a sizeable portion of their labour products. Those in control of the state siphoned off the farmers' surpluses to support themselves, the state and other non-producers. Douglas E. Oakman (cited in Gottwald 1993:359) suggests that anywhere from 75 to 90 percent of a peasant's annual produce could go towards payment of taxes and interest on loans. In emergencies, the king could proclaim a special tax (2 Kings 15:19-20; 2 Kings 23:33-35). Peasant farmers did not amass much wealth, even though they created the bulk of the wealth. A small number of privileged people estimated by Marvin L. Chaney (1986:55-56) to be no more than two percent of the population, and institutions such as palaces and temples controlled up to half or more of the total wealth. The surplus labour product was appropriated by the ruling elite who, apart from not producing, plainly disdained physical labour. The surplus value could be hoarded by the non-producer who appropriated it, or it could be dispensed to other non-producers who provided various goods and services to the extracting non-producer. It could also be used for public works, defense, or for public religious ceremonies. In the later monarchy, it was also used to pay tribute to the suzerain states. At times it could be used to improve the conditions of production so that a larger



surplus value would be extracted at a later date (Gottwald 1993:148). Corvée, indentured and slave labour were universal in the ancient Near East and these were also used to enrich the elite. The Israelite king had a right to call on his subjects to perform corvée labour on his estates, state building projects as well as serve in the military.

While the peasants were living in conditions of near starvation, the upper classes would have liked them to increase their production so that they in turn would get more wealth through taxation. However, it was in the self-interest of the rulers to ensure that the villages produced enough for expropriation and yet not threaten the sustainability of village agriculture from which they depended. Wise monarchs had to take care not to alienate the majority of the peasants by letting avaricious tax collectors abuse the tax system, which had the potential of triggering resistance. Weber (1976 (1896): 63-64) observed that hereditary rulers generally preferred a “prudent and durable rate of exploitation” and security of revenues to trying to maximise capital accumulation. The monarchs were well aware that when such behaviour got out of hand, it encouraged social unrest and threatened to destroy the fragile states. Mesopotamian kings detailed instances of popular unrest because of economic exploitation and efforts to counter such unrest by freeing debt slaves and pronouncing reprieves on debts that involved the pledging or loss of land (Postgate 1992:195). In Israel, the policy of debt easement was also promulgated while other forms of economic exploitation were also kept under control. A wise monarch thus had the task of protecting the privileges of the upper classes and at the same time ensuring that the peasants were not excessively exploited or disaffected to the point that they would undermine peace and order. It does not however, seem that these measures were effective as the exploitation continued unabated and peasants continued to wallow in poverty.

Farmers must surely have resented seeing most of the fruit of their hard labour being carried away by non-producers. From Egypt we learn that farmers regularly attempted to hide portions of their harvest so that it would not be taxed (Trigger 2003:376). Tax collectors sought to prevent this by forcing farmers who claimed to have produced less to reveal their hiding places (Trigger 2003:376). We might not be far from the truth in assuming that in so far as they could, Israelite peasant farmers attempted to evade taxation by hiding some of their surplus produce. When they could get away with it, tax collectors extracted the largest possible surplus from the peasants and embezzled some of the produce for their own pockets. The upper classes also competed among themselves for the peasants’ surpluses leaving them

only the barest subsistence necessary to remain productive. As a result of taxation, peasants suffered a decline in their standard of living and were brought closer and closer to the brink of starvation as they struggled to meet state demands for their labour and produce. But how is it that two percent or less of the total population would succeed to sustain their privileged position, their autocratic rule, and show apparent lack of concern for the impoverished toiling peasants? And how is it that the majority would allow to be impoverished by the state to the point of near starvation? It is to the role of ideology that we now turn.

#### ***4.5 Ideology***

On its own, coercion was never sufficient to maintain peace and order in society. Internal peace and order of Israel and Judah depended on the villagers feeling reasonably well served by their rulers and on their readiness to respond to state demands without the use of disproportionate coercion (Gottwald 2001:233). The monarchs were well aware that resorting to brute force alone (that is, use of power without authority) to get consent of the peasants to pay taxes and provide corvée labour in states that were not very cohesive and for the most part an amalgam of structural oppositions, and thus fragile, would not always succeed. Furthermore, because the people had experienced freedom from taxation and corvée labour for two centuries and also because state power had been contested right from the beginning, justifying that power, let alone the excessive appropriation of the peasants' surpluses by the rulers, was going to be a huge challenge. We must assume that serious reflection on what made power rightful in such a society ought to have taken place. The elites were therefore inclined to "soft power" with a predominantly religious justification.

Peasants would rarely give up their surpluses willingly; yet tax had to be exacted by the state and corvée labour provided. To do this the rulers had to uphold a socio-economic order which persuaded the peasants that, despite the expropriation of their surpluses, it made their lives more prosperous and secure than they would be in its absence. The elites should have convinced the exploited that the state was indispensable and that without it life would be the Hobbesian "nasty, brutish and short." They wished to maintain the fiction that they were doing so for the benefit of all, that they represented the aspirations of everyone, and that the state itself was neutral or at least God-given (Boer 2015:137-8). Thus legitimization of the regime's right to rule could be achieved by providing leadership perceived as advantageous to a majority of the peasants, or at least to those influential subjects who once exercised power

in the pre-state era. Through an appropriate ideology, reinforced by coercion, the elites induced the peasantry to increase its production and persuaded even those subsisting on the very margins of existence, under conditions of near starvation, to increase their production and surrender their produce to the state (Frick 1977:14). Since peasants in early states depended on the state for defence from external attack and the maintenance of internal order, they were prepared to tolerate and at least minimally support a state that could do this. The peasants seem to have tacitly acknowledged that without domestic peace and order and defence against foreign attacks that the state provides, everyday life would be far worse for them. They would have been grateful for the services that the state provided, and in return pay their taxes and provide labour to the upper classes for these benefits. They would have been prepared to do this if they believed they were not extortionate and were imposed reasonably equitable.

The ideological superstructure also functioned to strengthen the nuclear family at the expense of the tribe or clan by emphasising the importance of the conjugal bond between husband and wife (Simkins 1999:137). Yehudi A. Cohen (1969) has persuasively demonstrated that early states exercised control over sexual behaviour as a means of political control. Sexual violations such as premarital sex, adultery and incest are viciously condemned and in some cases capital punishment is prescribed (Cohen 1969:662). This, he notes, was meant to weaken local corporate groups by strengthening conjugal bonds. Given that an early state has not yet completely subverted local sources of solidarity, allegiance and authority, Cohen argues, strong, emotional conjugal bonds of the nuclear family are emphasised (cf. Genesis 2:22-25) because they are beneficial to the centralised state, unlike corporate kinship groups which can be a source of rebellion (Cohen 1969:661). Using insights from Cohen's work on her study on the laws in Deuteronomy 19:1-25:19, Naomi Steinberg (1993) concluded that the laws functioned to serve the interests of political centralisation. Only in the laws in Deuteronomy 19-25, she goes on, does one find laws that emphasise centralised authority over local political boundaries. The Deuteronomic law code moves social boundaries away from the kinship structure of the pre-state period, in order to reduce local authority, which was perceived as potentially threatening to the emerging state (Steinberg 1993:369). In a social system where lineage had previously been of primary importance, the local kinship relationship had to be subverted, lest individuals would unite and rise against the state (Steinberg 1993:366). In a study of the patriarchal narratives and genealogies in Genesis,

Robert R. Wilson (1977:193-95) notes that they functioned to incorporate all Israelites within a single extended kinship group. He concluded that rather than serving to rank one tribe over another, they functioned ideologically to express the unity of Israel. All Israelites are presented as equal members of the family of Jacob. By exalting the unity of Israel, the genealogies and patriarchal narratives served to weaken tribal and clan loyalties (Simkins 1999:137).

The elite had thus to legitimate the state, make the peasants believe that it was an indispensable institution which they should support even to the point of sacrificing their entire agricultural surplus. This does not, however, mean that ideological claims made by the elites were blindly accepted. The overtaxed and defrauded peasants resisted the tax burden. The narrative of the division of the united Israelite monarchy (2 Kings 12) gives insight into the resistance and defiance of subjects of ancient states to onerous taxation and heavy corvée. Yet by-and-large, from their meagre surpluses they continued to pay their obligatory taxes and perform corvée labour as demanded by their rulers. The little surpluses in good years - when rains were good and the pests away - enabled the households to pay their taxes and to survive during bad times which were always lurking around the corner. But when bad years occurred more frequently - due to drought, pestilence or disease - then the crops would wilt, the herd depleted, and then there was no food for the household's own consumption and no surplus to pay the tax. Decimated by hunger, the desperate head of the house was left with no alternative but to turn to loan sharks for survival loans which made the difference between life and death.

#### ***4.6 Debt slavery***

Charging interest on loans was a common practise in the ancient Near East. In Israel, the law forbade the charging of interest on loans to fellow countrymen (e.g. Ex 22:25; Lev 25:36-37; Deut 23:19-20). As long as the peasant farmers of the pre-state era enjoyed the fruit of their own arduous collective labour and were bound together in a covenant of mutual aid, they would assist those who would have fallen on hard times without charging interest. But with the introduction of taxation, the peasants could no longer afford the luxury of helping their kith and kin. With the emergence of the monarchy and the development of private property, communal norms and ideals were gradually pushed to the side. Tribal authority was weakening as social stratification increased. The tribal norms on usury were largely ignored

by the money lenders among the upper classes who had become rich through the peasant taxes and rent on use of their lands. They were eager to give loans at usurious interest rates to desperate peasant farmers who had no choice but to accept. Taking a survival loan, for example, a bucket of grain for consumption or sowing put them into debt because of the staggering interest rates. Some loans were raised on the value and security of the next harvest (Premnath 1988:51). But if the crops failed in a bad season, then the peasant sank deeper into debt. Some loans would be repaid through working on the estates owned by the loan sharks. This of course meant reduced time of working on their own fields, leading to an increased dependence on the loan sharks (van De Mierop 2007:170). But most of the time, to get a loan, the creditor demanded collateral from the borrower. For that, the peasant farmer only had his ancestral land, his person and his family members. At first, the farmer would give his piece of land as collateral. But as the interest piled up and the debtor was not in a position to redeem his pledge, the land was forfeited to the loan shark. The extended family might have been willing to offer support to prevent the forfeiture of the land, but it is most likely that they simply did not have the means to do so. Foreclosure on collateral was at the discretion of the lender. The former peasant family would continue to labour on the same patrimonial land that they once worked for generations but they now worked it as landless hired labourers. Only the labour was theirs. Labour and land ownership which had all along been inseparable went separate ways. As patrimonial lands were lost to unpaid debts, most peasants became tenants or hired labourers while others did whatever jobs were available. Life for the peasant families became increasingly difficult as the loss of land and indebtedness intensified. Over and above normal taxation, usury was a second and more brutal instrument for peasants' surplus extraction.

With their land gone and still needing more loans to go by, the former smallholder farmer still had some more to give up. A free individual had the right to pledge himself (Lev 25:39) or a family member as collateral (Lev 25:31). Should he default on the loan repayment, the pledged family member would automatically become a servant of the moneylender (cf. 2 Kings 4:1f). The debtor would serve the creditor for six years (Ex 21:2) or until the debt was paid up. The pledged family members would in turn go the way of the land that he previously owned. A new beginning after years of slavery for debt became very difficult. Ultimately, he was forced to surrender or sell himself to become a property of the extremely merciless large landowner. Foreclosure upon the lands and family members involved the judiciary which would have been expected to take a cue from the tradition of consensus justice in the village

courts and safeguard the interests of the peasants. But because the justice system, like the state, had been captured, and was to all intents and purposes an instrument at the service of the rich and powerful landowners, the corrupt courts approved the foreclosures viewed as illegal by the peasants (Chaney 2006:148). Just as taxation was done by the state, it is most probable that money-lending was a state-administered activity or was done with the blessing of the state (Gottwald 1993:155-6). If so, then the very taxes that the peasants paid were returned to them at usurious interest rates. Thus the elites appropriated peasant surpluses in two systemically linked ways: a state tax-rent which in turn gave rise to a credit system. The pauperisation of the peasantry necessitated by heavy tax-rent generated gave birth to credit system. As Gottwald (1993:153) puts it, the tax-rent initiated a process of surplus extraction so disruptive of the peasant economy that it necessarily created a secondary means of extraction by credit-debt payment. Two factions of the ruling class can be identified by how they acquired peasant surpluses: the functionaries appropriated tax-rent while latifundiaries benefitted from the debt-credit system.

Mac Van De Mierop (2007:170) hypothesises that what the large landowners needed the most was labour, which was always in short supply. A shift in the mode of production of necessity required a corresponding adjustment to the supply of labour. And so, debt instruments served to draw in cheap labour into the pool by making peasants indebted to the money-lending landed elites. Over and above reducing previously free peasant farmers to landless wage labourers or debt-slaves, usury also served to consolidate land ownership in the hands of large landowners (Chaney 1986:68). It served as a major means of accomplishing both land consolidation and the pauperisation of the peasantry (Chaney 2006:148). More and more peasant land was getting concentrated in fewer and fewer hands of the large landowners, with devastating consequences for the peasant majority.

#### ***4.7 Latifundialization***

Latifundialization refers to the process of land accumulation in the hands of a few wealthy landowners at the expense of the peasants (Premnath 1988:49). The beginning of latifundialization can be seen already during the emergence of the monarchy when certain categories of state officers were paid through land grants (prebends). It does seem that prebends accompanied the office, rather than actually owned by the officials. The king had at his disposal vast tracks of land which he acquired through a variety of ways. Apart from

patrimonial land, it seems land that had been abandoned by its owner for a long period of time automatically became property of the king (cf. 2 Kings 8:1-6). The king also seems to have had the right to take over lands belonging to condemned criminals (cf. I Kings 21). Conquered lands from the surrounding peoples automatically became the king's. With so much land at his disposal, the king seems to have dished out parcels of land to his favoured bureaucrats and to his patronage networks. Some of it was let out to villagers who paid half or more of their total produce to the crown in the form of taxes and rents for the use of the land (Chaney 1986:61). This was in sharp contrast to the pre-state era where peasants had plots of land, probably used for both cultivation and residence, which might have been owned by the whole village and periodically redistributed so that no single family could monopolise the best arable land (Premnath 1988:53). The officers who received prebends seem to have been cushioned against the vicissitudes of regular drought and pestilence. Their large estates coupled with their close proximity to the centre of political power and access to corvée labour could have made them fairly wealthy in a short period of time such that they were able, from their surpluses, to advance survival loans to poor peasants who would have fallen on hard times. Furthermore, the absentee landowners benefitted immensely from the phenomenon of "rent capitalism" in which they charged massive rentals on landless peasants not just for use of their land but also on each of the factors of production, such as water, seed and draught animals. As the system intensified, available resources were increasingly concentrated in the hands of the absentee urban-based landowning wealthy loan sharks who wanted to become even wealthier.

Most peasant farmers had their plots in the highlands while the lowlands were already in the hands of the elite. As the peasant lands were foreclosed upon and joined together to form large estates, Chaney (1993:251) observes a shift to the specialised cultivation of cash crops. On the estates in the lowlands were grown wheat while on the highlands vines (for wine) and olives (for oil), ideal commodities for export because of their value per unit of weight or volume. These commodities were coveted by the ruling elites at home and abroad. In exchange for this triad - wheat, olive oil and wine - the ruling classes got military equipment and luxury goods which benefitted them but did not at all benefit the majority. The increased production of wine and oil seems to suggest thriving international trade. However, this was virtually a royal monopoly which was limited to luxury goods whose distribution was limited to the urban elite (Frick 1977:16). The more the imports of luxury goods meant more and

more exports which in turn meant heavier taxation and rent on the peasants. Exports competed directly with peasant sustenance forcing the elites to increase the cultivation of the three major export crops. Chaney (2006:148) sees the development of what he terms “command economies” in which the elites usurped the peasants’ power to determine their own priorities and techniques of agricultural production and literally coerced them to abandon growing their staple grains and grow the three crops of choice through incentive or coercion.

Whereas in the pre-state era, the distribution of goods was determined by *need*, under the new system, distribution was determined by *power*, especially power over control of land use, markets and the credit system (Premnath 1988:52). State policy seems to have encouraged the “efficient” cultivation of the three preferred crops for export and elite indulgence, thus eroding the risk-spreading mechanisms of peasant agriculture. The elites could proclaim a heavy tax on grain produced “inefficiently” by peasant farmers in an effort to coerce them to grow the preferred crops. This pressure to grow the three preferred crops concentrated risk and severely affected the sustenance of the peasants, directing them to loan sharks whose loans at staggering interest rates left many peasants living on the margin. For their staple food crops, they were forced to buy from the market where the merchants falsified scales and rigged measures, making the peasant farmers lose even the more. As the amount of land owned by the landlords increased, the number of land owners constantly declined and the economic gap widened between those who owned land and those who merely worked on it. Furthermore, the real producers who worked the land were not at all benefiting from the fruits of their own hard labour. Rather, impoverished as they were, they still bore the brunt of heavy taxation. They hovered perennially on the brink of economic ruin. With all this wealth, the landowners retreated to the city to enjoy their wealth in splendour with the result that absentee landlordism increased. A discussion of the city in Israel and the ancient Near East is important at this stage.

#### ***4.8 Living large in the city in monarchic Israel***

The tax-rent from the peasant farmers found its way into the city allowing for the concentration of the surplus product. The city could only exist when the state was able to extract the surplus from the farmers in the form of taxes. Without the little surpluses from the hard working subsistence farmers it is inconceivable that a city could have developed. It was



a dependent rather than an independent variable that could not survive without the produce of the villages, thus the city's gratitude to the peasant farmers. Indeed Yohanan Aharoni (cited in Frick 1977:78) includes nearness and ease of access to agricultural lands as one of the main reasons which determined the choice of a city site in ancient Israel. In spite of rapid urbanisation in monarchic Israel, the economy remained for the most part agricultural. Frank S. Frick (1977:92) notes that the ancient Israelite city should be viewed as part of a total rural-urban or city-village system which included the "mother city" together with its "daughter villages" and the city's fields. A rigid rural-urban dichotomy is not applicable to ancient monarchic Israel. We should rather think in terms of interdependence and intimate connection of the urban and the rural because the two formed a natural economic unit. Frick (1977:13) argues in favour of a "commuting" pattern in which the city's lower classes left the city in the morning to spend the day working on the fields and then returning to the city for the night. The city was, as it were, a "bedroom community." It was walled and provided defense against foreign aggressors. It appears the villages were unwalled and dependent on the walled city for security. Frick (1977:93) cites a passage in the KRT text from Ras Shamra which shows city dwellers working outside the walls of the city and in time of danger, an alarm would be sounded, and in response, the workers would rush inside the city.

Though they owned the estates, the elite were urbanites who preferred to live in the city than on the country estates. It does seem that the supervision of the estates was outsourced to managers while the landlord lived in the city with little or no direct contact with the labourers who made it possible for him to live a life of luxury (Sjoberg 1960:112). Commanding the means to extract surpluses from a starving peasantry and barking orders via the managers, the elites were far removed from the grinding misery of the peasants. They were concentrated in urban areas to ensure their dominance over the whole society and to reinforce their privileges as a group rather than be scattered all over the country estates. In spite of their contestations as a class, the elites in early states, such as the two Israels, had many characteristics in common, including control of a hugely unequal amount of the wealth and cooperation in defending their privileges and dominance in opposition to lower-class discontent. In this social order with little surplus and very few opportunities for economic expansion and upward mobility by the lower classes, the upper classes used their economic and social power to reinforce their social position. Permitting lower classes access to certain scarce goods and services would simply undermine its own status. There was therefore a need to ensure that the symbols of status were not encroached on by the lower classes. Residing in close proximity to

one another enabled them to bond together and to grow interpersonal contacts. Interaction among them enabled them to make cohesive policy and enhanced their collective representations. By so doing they influenced the decisions of the powers-that-be and thus preserved their privileged position. The stiffness of the class system set up overwhelming obstacles to the dissemination of knowledge among the classes. This enabled the elite to cut themselves socially from the peasants and to promote the power and authority of their class. Location in the city also enabled them to access a variety of goods and services from merchants and craftsmen among others.

Most important for this work on the discussion of the city is Sjoberg's observation that perhaps the most salient feature of the ancient city is the all-pervasiveness of its stratification system, above all the rigid class structure (Sjoberg 1960:108). The city's familial, economic and political structures are difficult to imagine without reference to social class. Differences between social classes are all too obvious to notice in the city. The distinctiveness of personal attributes makes it easy to identify one's class. In a society where the elite wear "designer" clothing and the peasants, rags, one's dress immediately betrays one's class. Class is also evident in the different linguistic patterns used by the various classes in the city. Upper class speech is markedly different from that of the lower classes in vocabulary, grammar and phonology (Sjoberg 1960:128). The educated elite use formal lexical and grammatical forms shaped after the standard written language that the illiterate peasants rarely have the opportunity to acquire, thus further reinforcing the rigid class structure of the ancient society. While in physical form the Israelite city bore a close resemblance to the acropolis of the typical Greek city, its socio-political function was, however, different. Whereas the acropolis of the Greeks served as the defensible civic centre of a democratic community, Frick (1977:87) notes that the layout of the Israelite citadel, particularly at Samaria, makes it quite explicit that the area within the citadel wall was not a civic centre, but rather an exclusive enclosure for the rulers (Frick 1977:87). He adds that the layout within the citadel was spacious and the rooms were big. The citadel served to symbolise the huge social distance between the ruling elite on the one hand, and the commoners on the other. The citadel in the Israelite city, as elsewhere, was the palace where the king and his top administrative staff lived (and worked), but also contained the royal cemetery (Frick 1977:88). The burial of the rulers within the city also served to set them apart from the common people who were buried outside the city walls. In his analysis of an excavated rock-cut bench Mount Zion tomb,

(Hopkins 1996:129) concluded that it offers the clearest indicator of social hierarchy in ancient Israel. Hopkins (1996:129) suggests that the tomb and the grave goods were associated with the burial practices of the wealthy. Even in death, the ruling elite maintained their status.

The city, it should be noted, was primarily a site of consumption, rather than a centre of trade and commerce. From the wealth that they accumulated, the elite indulged in conspicuous consumption and enjoyed a lavish lifestyle that completely set them apart from the lower classes. This flamboyance reinforced their power and authority (Trigger 2003:152; Sjöberg 1960:118-9). In fact, as Trigger (2003:89) notes, ancient Near Eastern kings legitimated their claims to power through lavish lifestyles. The wealth of the monarch was a sign of his social greatness and of the power of his kingdom. Irrespective of the extent of their power, the elite lived in splendid palaces, wore magnificent clothes and elaborate jewellery, and had many officers at their service (Trigger 2003:89). The upper classes used goods that were made by highly skilled artisans often imported or from imported materials. As a result of international commerce, the art and literature of the high cultures of the region flowed into Israel for the elites. It is quite possible that they became lovers and collectors of fine art, archaeological objects and interesting reproductions (Silver 1983:104). They embarked on massive building projects and richly furnished them on the template of the architecture from the major powers of the day. They also entertained lavishly and bequeathed rare and prized presents on their visitors and faithful supporters. Sumptuous marriage ceremonies were the order of the day for the elites when they married off their children.

Such conspicuous consumption evoked admiration and awe from the lower classes, rather than envy or bitterness. The lavish display of wealth helped deepen the aura surrounding the elite. On the religious front, ancient Near Eastern monarchs built massive temples, made extravagant sacrifices to their gods and presided over lavish rituals. The public rituals revealed the wealth, power and privileges of the upper classes who controlled these events. The temple had become a site of wanton display of elitism and wealth (Silver 1985:22). Putting aside historicity, the description of King Solomon's temple in 1 Kings 6 gives insight into the extravagance that kings were willing to display on temples. Clearly the elite were successful in securing a luxury and privileged life for itself. The best that their society had to offer and what luxuries could be imported from the surrounding nations were for them

(Sjoberg 1960:220). Their lives had more in common with the ruling elite of other ancient Near Eastern kingdoms than with their peasant subjects.

But while the rich were basking in splendour and luxury, the situation was getting worse for the encumbered poor who were as landless as they were jobless. The elites had used the law of credit cleverly and without paying any heed to the welfare of the peasant majority to become wealthy. Through systematic exploitation of the peasants, the privileged classes prospered and became extremely wealthy while the majority of the toiling peasants were in dire straits. The Israelite society had created and sustained a situation where some got far more than they needed while others got nothing. The peasants agonised at the hands of the elites, who were bent on perpetuating their own wealth. As so often in history, the greatest riches went hand-in-glove with utmost poverty (Ahlström 1993:121). Prosperity brought with it severe differentiation between the peasants, and the nouveaux-riches absentee landlords, living in cities as large dealers and high grade bureaucrats, exploiting their privileged economic position to the detriment of the population as a whole (Yeivin, cited in Silver 1983:75). Regardless of the wealth of the kingdoms, the condition of the peasants never improved, but if anything, got worse. Economic “growth” and “development” had produced deep economic and political inequality leading to the impoverishment of the masses. Bureaucrats, merchants, and big landholders prospered while the peasants, the source of their wealth were pauperised. This selective distribution of resources was enforced by the state and law and justified by ideology, more especially religion. The deep social divisions were replicated and solidified over time. This fuelled extreme bitterness and grievance, and eroded the morale of the majority (Gottwald 1985:323). Caught up in rounds of state manpower drafts and taxation, crushed beneath the load of accumulated debts, subject to onerous tribute, and physically devastated by wars, the sole authentic sources of Israel’s wealth, its agricultural economy, and its courageous labouring peasants, were decimated to the point that they could no longer sustain the superstructure of the state (Gottwald 1993:311-12).

The Elijah-Elisha cycle in the books of Kings give us access to the severe deprivation of the peasantry. In these stories, famine and death stalk the peasants. They narrate how the prophets met the basic life needs of villagers who were suffering under royal abuse and famine (Gottwald 1985:351). The prophets performed miracles on behalf of the poor who would not get justice from the justice system. The stories seem to have been intended to advocate the cause of defrauded and wronged who, abandoned or even victimised by the elite

were repeatedly brought to the attention of the authorities by prophetic intervention (Gottwald 1985:352). In his study of "enemies" in the book of Psalms, Gerald T. Sheppard (1993:381-382) observes that the psalms vividly describe wicked people in their society who abuse widows, strangers and orphans and sees prayers not as a silent agony, but a form of protest, complaint and indictment done publicly in the presence of the audience to which the enemies belong. The unnamed enemies could probably have been members of the exploitative upper class. Gunther H. Wittenberg (1991) has challenged the traditional view that wisdom has its origin at the court, suggesting rather that its setting is among the "people of the land." Scholars have long observed that while royal interests are absent from the collections of proverbial sayings, however, most of the sayings and admonitions in Proverbs display an "agricultural ideal" (Wittenberg 1991:155-156). Furthermore, the agricultural ideal is clearly articulated in Proverbs and later in Job where the hero of this drama is a wealthy farmer and not a royal scribe. Wittenberg goes on to say that while agriculture is extolled in wisdom literature trade and commerce are rejected as sinful. It would therefore seem strange that wisdom teachers at the royal school in Jerusalem should have warned their students against money-lending and commerce (Wittenberg 1991:157). He concludes that the most plausible setting of wisdom is not the court but the Judean "people of the land" (Wittenberg 1991:157). If Wittenberg's reconstruction is correct, then it points to a system of enslavement for debt that was fuelling intense resentment among the peasants. The eighth century prophets emerged to critique this political economy of terror that had led to the mass impoverishment of the peasantry.

#### ***4.9 Prophetic criticism of Israelite political economy***

Whether as men of God called to condemn this political economy, or as a group of rival elites jostling for control of political power and resultant resources, for the prophets, the Israelite political economy is a political economy of terror. The prophets criticise how the greedy ruling elite in cohorts with the judiciary was systematically expropriating the land of villagers, becoming extremely wealthy and displaying it flamboyantly in a lavish conspicuous consumption economy (Gottwald 1985:356). The prophets attack the rampant economic expansion of the great landowners, who acquire all the land until they are the only landowners (Is 5:8; Mic 2:1f). Isaiah 5:8 suggests sweeping accumulation of land in the hands of a few that deprive the peasants. The joining of house to house, and field to field clearly refers to the formation of large estates by absorbing neighbouring plots of land. The

punishment for the rapacious motives of the landowners to reap a bumper harvest through the efficient cultivation of the crops of choice, will be a total failure of the crop (Is 5:10). The prophets also criticise the uncontrolled hunger for more and more land which forces out the peasant farmers from their *נַחֲלָה* (Am 8:4; Mic 2:9). The system of credit and pledges is also a subject of serious criticism. The heartless manipulation of the law of credit which leads the poor into slavery for debt (Am 2:6; 8:6) is severely criticised. For only tiny debts, the loan sharks require a disproportionately big pledge. In their view the whole debt system is downright theft and plunder (Is 3:14; Mic 2:2; 3:2; Jer 5:27; Am 4:1). Micah 3:2-3 compares the loan sharks to savage butchers and voracious cannibals who treat people like animals ready to be consumed. Through the credit system, they tear the skin and flesh from the peasants and then eat it.

The prophets also condemn the inconsiderate life of extravagance which the upper classes engaged in at the expense of the poor. What is extorted as tax-rent from poverty-stricken fellow countrymen is invested in well-built houses and vineyards for the power elite. The prophets are enraged by extravagance and extreme riches of a minority juxtaposed with a majority wallowing in abject poverty. The elite are accused of building fine town houses for themselves out of cut stone (Am 3:15; 5:11). They spend most of their time feasting (Is 5: 11-12; Am 6:1-7) and pompously display the pledges that they have taken (Am 2:8). Women of Samaria are compared to well-fed “Cows of Bashan” (Am 4:1). In the book of Amos, urban luxury and extravagance is on every page. While the peasants do not even have a piece of land to call their own, the rich have separate residences for winter and summer (Am 3:15). They lie on ivory beds and cushions, eat fattened lambs, and use the finest oil (Am 6:4-6). There is also mention of perfume (Am 6:6), as well as music and singing (Am 5:23; 6:5). The Israelite justice system is not spared. Judges are bribed by the rich to rule in their favour even when they are wrong (Is 5:20, 23; Am 5:12; Mic 3:9, 11). In the view of the prophets, the justice system is simply a partisan instrument of oppression for the ruling class (Albertz 1994:165). The state justice in the capital is even worse; the helpless and the widows are victimised and denied justice (Is 1:23; 10:1f). The prophets see the plight of the poor majority as a fault of the minority who are getting richer and richer, and pronounce judgement in the name of their God. Yahweh, in their view, will not accept the injustice being done to weak by the strong. Their God is on the side of the weak and oppressed. What the prophets find lacking in the Israelite political economy is *חֶסֶד* and *דִּינָה* (Is 5:7; Am 5:7, 24; 6:12; Mic 3:1,

8, 9). According to Albertz (1994:166) what these two terms mean is a just balance of interests for the well-being of all, a social solidarity which secures basic rights for all Israelites. In the eyes of these men, the future of the kingdoms of Israel is ultimately decided on the presence or absence of *צדק* and *שלום*. In their view, a society that is so broken and torn asunder does not have a future unless the power elite accept and acknowledge their guilt and change their behaviour (Albertz 1994:167).

#### ***4.10 Conclusion***

In the foregoing discussion we noted how the city elites, themselves non-producers, extracted the surplus agricultural produce from the peasant majority who were the direct producers. We also saw how the intensified combination of surplus extraction and debt led to the impoverishment of the peasants. The picture that emerges from this discussion is of a centralised state living parasitically off the poor peasants. It is a picture of a rapacious and insensitive urban elite bent on increasing its wealth, by hook or crook, at the expense of the exploited hard working peasants, struggling to access the bare necessities of life. From our reconstruction of the political economy of monarchic Israel, it becomes apparent that we are dealing with a political economy of terror. In the next chapter, we discuss the modern state.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: THE MODERN STATE**

### ***5.0 Introduction***

In Chapter 2, we looked at the “early state”, its emergence and nature, thus implying that the state system was already prevalent in antiquity. Then in Chapter 4, we spoke of the ancient monarchic Israel as a “state” among other ancient “states”. By taking Israel, and indeed any other ancient polity, as a state, is it implied that ancient Israel was a state in the same way as 21<sup>st</sup> century Zimbabwe or South Africa is a state? If not, what is the difference between those polities of antiquity and modern states? Is there any justification for having the descriptor “modern”? In this chapter, we will look at the “modern state,” that is, when it emerged, its nature and its future. We will also have a detailed discussion of the Marxist understanding(s) of the state. This chapter will conclude the discussion of the “state” that we sought to do right at the beginning of this work.

### ***5.1 The Modern state***

The modern state has literally swept the world. It is the most powerful, continuously authoritative, and most inclusive organisation in the history of the human species (Cohen 1978:31). Virtually every square inch on the world map is the territory of some state, so are the minerals beneath it, the airspace above it and the waters surrounding it. There can hardly be a rocky outcrop anywhere which has not been claimed by at least one state (Pierson 2004:10). We live in a world divided into states and each and every single person lives in a state, and is, at least formally, subject to a state (Eriksen 2005:397). More still, the state as a form of socio-political organisation, has been around for a while for it to box our political imagination. We thus do not have the intellectual tools and resources to imagine ourselves living without the state. We are so familiar with the state system that we cannot even imagine an alternative model of socio-political organisation. It is actually difficult now, if not impossible, to conceive of human life without the state. It penetrates virtually every facet of our mortal lives. Our lives begin and end within the state’s borders.



Given the importance of the state for modern life, it is not surprising that scholars should devote considerable time to its analysis. Yet from being at the centre of scholarship during the early 1900s, it became a victim of much criticism until it almost disappeared from political science in the English-speaking world towards the middle of the last century. While this was not the case though in France, Germany and Italy, it was in Britain and the United States that the academic climate was not receptive of a discussion on the state (Vincent 1987:1). The term was, as it were, excommunicated from scientific vocabulary and virtually disappeared from the professional academic lexicon. Theorists wrote about governments, legislative behaviour, political system, voting, leadership, interest groups, bureaucratic politics, almost everything but “the state” (Krasner 1984:223). The state was viewed as something that does not exist, a mystification and something not worthy of any serious scholarly effort. Gill (2003:1) avers that this may partly have been a response to experiences of the horrors of the state, especially of Nazi Germany. For example John Dewey (cited in Vincent 1987:2) wrote: “The moment we utter the words “the state” a score of intellectual ghosts rise to obscure our vision.” For George Sabine (cited in Bartelson 2001:77), the state

commonly denotes no class of objects that can be identified exactly, and for the same reason it signifies no list of attributes which bears the sanction of common usage. The word must be defined more or less arbitrarily to meet the exigencies of the system of jurisprudence or political philosophy in which it occurs.

Carl Joachim Friedrich (cited in Bartelson 2001:92) adds:

We may go so far as to assert that the state does not exist. There are governments, peoples, countries, there are kings, parliaments, dictators, parties and concentration camps, but there is no evidence in support of the idea that some sort of holy unity, some mystical transcendence need be attributed to them.

However, the state came back with force to be an object of scientific enquiry due to the growing calls in the 1970s and 80s to “bring the state back in”.

### **5.1.1 Modern state as double-edged sword**

The state has been a double-edged sword to humanity. While it has brought massive improvements to human life - the development of the rule of law, of democratic forms of government with broad franchises, of constitutional constraints on governments, of divisions

of powers, and of the institution of norms of tolerance - it has also inflicted terrible suffering on its citizens (Morris 2002:4). In more ways than one, the exercise of political power in many parts of the world has become less brutal and exploitative than before the emergence of the state system. Furthermore, states have given humanity many opportunities to achieve their ambitions and dreams. However, the evils of the modern state have been striking and appalling. The state has become the site, if not agent, of extraordinary evil. The past century and its two world wars and man-made calamities, all sanctioned by, or at least condoned by the states, has painfully brought to the fore the potential for evil that the states have. Reports of conditions of life in the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, in China under Mao Tse-tung and in Iraq under Saddam Hussein painfully remind us of the evils raw state power can commit. The current situation and the jostling for power in Syria should also be viewed in this way. The brutal oppression of majorities in the colonies by the minority governments, the persecution of citizens by their own governments in the post-colonial states and by military dictatorships have left many disgusted by the state system. One only needs to look at the situation in Ethiopia under Mengistu Haile Mariam, Darfur in Sudan under Omar al-Bashir, Zaire under Joseph Mobutu and Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe, to mention a few classical African cases, to condemn the state system *in toto*.

The desire to control state power has also brought immense suffering to humanity. The suffering that the people of South Sudan have endured since 1955, first to secede from the north and then the civil conflict thereafter, shows how states and the desire to control state power has led to indescribable suffering of citizens. To these should be added the exploitation and other forms of systematic oppression prevalent in the contemporary capitalist world with the blessing of the state. States provide the environment conducive for the systematic exploitation of individuals in capitalist states. In fact, as we shall see when we look at the Marxist understandings of the relationship of the state to capital, there is a sense in which in contemporary globalisation, the state is an instrument in the hand of big business and dances to its tune. For critics of the state system, its costs are, in the long run, substantially greater than the benefits.

### **5.1.2 Emergence of the modern state**

The majority of theorists regard the state as a very recent phenomenon, a feature of the modern era (e.g., Tilly 1975, Vincent 1987, Hinsley 1986, Poggi 1990, Morris 1998, Milliken and Krause 2003). Of course, there are others who claim that the state had already emerged several thousand years before modernity. For example, Joseph Strayer (cited in Morris 1998:51) has argued that “in the centuries between 1000 and 1300, some of the essential elements of the modern state began to appear,” and by 1300 it was evident that the dominant political form in Western Europe was going to be the sovereign state. Strayer’s conclusion seems too confident and sweeping. The argument appears too simplistic and unilineal as to render the state’s triumph almost inevitable. But as discussed in Chapter Two, the emergence of a state was not inevitable. Thus it is our argument in this work that the state is a modern phenomenon.

The emergence of the modern state is commonly and simplistically dated to the 1648 Peace of Westphalia, which marked the end of the bloody Thirty Years' War, one of the bloodiest conflicts in the history of Europe. According to Michael Vaughan (2011:1), the Peace of Westphalia overturned the medieval system of centralised religious authority and replaced it with a decentralised system of sovereign, territorial states. The Treaty secularised international politics by separating it from the Roman Empire, anchoring it instead on the tenets of national interest and reasons of state. The peace might appear, therefore, to have terminated the pope's claim to universal authority and confirmed the diplomatic independence of secular rulers (Croxtton 1999:572). The territorial sovereignty of the states of the Holy Roman Empire was recognised and the princes of the empire became absolute sovereigns in their own jurisdictions.

Bruce Russett and Harvey Starr (1981:47) agree:

The end of the Thirty Years War brought with it the final end of the medieval Holy Roman Empire. Authority for choosing the religion of the political unit was given to the prince of that unit and not to the Hapsburg Emperor or the Pope. No longer could one pretend there was religious or political unity in Europe. Authority was dispersed to the various kings and princes, and the basis for the sovereign state was established.

Derek Croxton (1999:573) however argues that the claim that the Peace of Westphalia marked the end of Europe organised as a Christian community under the authority of pope or emperor is, greatly exaggerated. For him, the origins of sovereignty may only be located around the peace of Westphalia as a consequence of the negotiations, not of an explicit or implicit endorsement of the idea of sovereignty in the terms of the treaties (Croxton 1999:591).

However, it is generally agreed that it was around this time that a number of absolute monarchs consolidated their territories and concentrated political power in their own hands. But to wield both the civilian and military aspects of that power simultaneously, they set up an impersonal bureaucracy and a tax system needed for its survival and support. Martin van Creveld (1999:415) notes that the rules put in place for the bureaucracy could not be arbitrarily violated without risking a breakdown of the whole system. Thus power was slowly but surely changing hands, moving out of the monarch's hands into the bureaucracy, thus resulting in the rise of the state proper. Understood in this way, the modern state is an almost French and British (European) creation, and which took its now familiar form around the 18th and 19th centuries. Van Creveld (1999:18) adds that the state is, in many respects, an expression of modernity and many of its aspects presuppose features of the modern world.

As with the emergence of the ancient state, state centralisation or intensification of state power was a long drawn out process. The process that resulted in the emergence of the modern state evolved at a snail's pace, from the late medieval forms of socio-political organisation. The process proceeded in an enormously complex fashion over roughly five hundred years (Milliken and Krause 2003:3). From Western Europe, the state form of social organisation spread to the whole world as the European colonisers and later the Americans incorporated much of the world into overseas empires. The European state form was spread across the globe in the carry bag of imperialism (Gill 2003:191). In whatever they did, their aim was not to spread the state form of political organisation. Rather, they were on a mission to build political units which would enable them to rule the conquered territories from the imperial centre and make it easy for them to loot as much as they could from the colonies. Undermining traditional structures, all their systems – economic and political – were designed to serve the needs of the metropolis through supplying them with raw materials and cheap labour for industrialising Europe and for consumption. The break-up of the colonial

empires during the decolonisation process had an effect of universalising the European state form.

As colonialists were leaving their colonies, they left in place state structures modelled upon those at home (Gill 2003:191). The new nationalist leaders, most of whom had been educated in the West or had been caught up in the western ideas, inherited the state form from their former colonial masters as is, and made it their socio-political organisation. Japan, China, Turkey, and other countries that had not been colonised, also adopted the state form. By the 1970s, all states, including former colonial masters, former colonies, communists and those never engaged in imperialism, had adopted the state model as it had developed in Western Europe and the state system had become the dominant form of socio-political organisation on the globe. The entire world became occupied by independent states that, more or less, recognise each other's existence and right to exist. Its triumph had become all but complete. Charles Tilly (1990:183) sums it thus:

National states won out in the world as a whole because they first won out in Europe whose states then acted to reproduce themselves.

Understood in this way, the state is a recent phenomenon. Gianfranco Poggi (1990:25) argues that although one often speaks of "the modern state" strictly speaking the adjective "modern" is tautological. This is because the features that are characteristic of the "modern state" are not to be found in any political entities other than those which began to develop in the early-modern phase of European history. Henceforth, we will speak of "states" or "state", dropping the qualifier adjective "modern" when referring to these modern polities.

## **5.2 What is a "state"?**

The paradox is that although this is one of the most simple questions to be asked, yet it is elusive and probably the most problematic question in political sociology. We often think that we know what the state is, yet it is extremely difficult to describe it in some brief but generally acceptable definition. As a complex and contested concept, the state involves problems of meaning and application. Vincent (1987:3) notes that this is because of its ambivalence - its certainty and yet its elusiveness. It has a tendency to slip in and out of many practices and concepts with ease. The concept is many-sided and is vague around the edges.

In an attempt to define the state, we come across a puzzling range of options, including a case for dropping the idea altogether. A number of theorists, from differing political traditions, dodge this problem by refusing any explanatory value to the category of “the state”. Even more, empirically minded political scientists focus on “governments” and the “political system”, abandoning the suspiciously metaphysical realm of “the state” for institutions and practices (Pierson 2004:4). Those who are quite critical of the prevailing social order, especially those of a Marxist orientation, argue that talk of the state actually serves to conceal the exercise of political power.

In his unpacking of the state, Philip Abrams (1988) rejected the dominant view of the state as a distinct social unit separated from and “located” over and above the social (Mentan 2010:9). According to Abrams (1988:58), “the state is not the reality which stands behind the mask of political practice but is itself the mask which prevents people seeing political practice as it is.” He suggests that we abandon the state as a material object of study whether concrete or abstract while continuing to take the idea of the state extremely seriously because for him the internal and external relations of political and governmental institutions (the state-system) can be studied effectively without postulating the reality of the state (Abrams 1988:58). According to Michel Foucault (cited in Pierson 2004:4), the state may be no more than a composite reality and a “mythicised abstraction.” What matters for him is not so much the state as the much more generic practice of the “art of governing” and the corresponding idea of governmentality. The state is nothing more than a site of the practice of governing. Thus for him, to focus attention exclusively upon the state is to fail to capture the full range and intensity of governing practices that permeate and mediate the entire body politic (Pierson 2004:5).

Ralph Miliband (1970:49) emphasises the non-entity of the state, arguing that the “state” is not a thing; that it does not exist and what “the state” stands for is a cluster of institutions of political and executive control and their key personnel: the government, the bureaucracy, the military and the police, the judiciary, and parliament (Abrams 1988:71). Together these institutions constitute the state’s reality, and may be called the “state system.” Thus for Miliband, attempts at studying the state as if it were a real thing only contributes to the persistence of an illusion. In the same vein, Heinz Lubasz (cited in Vincent 1987:6) states that

the first thing to be said about the modern state is that it does not exist and never has existed. What has existed historically is a great number of modern states, with very varied constitutions.

Max Weber has also contributed to the definition of the state. Control over the means of violence is for him the defining characteristic of the state. He argues that ultimately, the modern state can be defined only in terms of the specific means peculiar to it as to every political association, namely; the use of physical force. He thus defines the state as “a human community that claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory” (Weber 1970:78). Based on Weber, Tilly (1975) argued that tax extraction for military purposes is the main driver for the rise of the state. Military purposes necessitated the process of tax extraction, which in turn necessitated the process of establishing bureaucratic staff to extract tax, and to manage and coordinate the flow of revenue to the state (Mentan 2010:12-13). Tilly (1975:70) concludes that

an organisation which controls the population occupying a defined territory is a state in so far as (1) it is differentiated from other organisations operating in the same territory; (2) it is autonomous; (3) it is centralised; and (4) its divisions are formally coordinated with one another (Tilly).

Following Tilly, Theda Skocpol (1979) regarded tax extraction as the main driver of state building, but put emphasis on the administrative and coercive organisation as the most important aspects of any state. The state for her is thus

a set of administrative, policing and military organisations headed, and more or less well coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these to create and support coercive and administrative organisations (Skocpol 1979:29).

Although he saw coercion as an important aspect of the state, Michael Mann (1988) did not consider it the be-all and end-all of the state. Instead, he emphasised the monopoly of the legislative and the centralised functional institutions, as the basis of any state (Mentan 2010:13). Consequently, he defined the state as

a differentiated set of institutions and personnel embodying; centrality in the sense that political forces radiate outwards from a centre to cover; a territorially demarcated area, over which it exercises; a monopoly of authoritative, binding rule-making, backed up by a monopoly of the means of physical violence (Mann 1988:4).

From the above survey, it appears there are as many definitions as there are scholars. It does look like we are faced with the same scenario as when defining what we termed the “early state”. Perhaps we should look at those features that are typical of the state as it developed from the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Probably we might be able to isolate these and use them as the basis for formulating a definition of a state.

### **5.3 Characteristics of the state**

In the earlier polities are already found some of the features of the state form of social and political organisation, such as distinctness from other forms of governance and from society generally, increasing centralisation of political authority, increasingly determinate realms or territories, integration of a number of different communities and associations (Morris 2002:27). But as the evolution progressed, certain features that are now typical of the state became clear. It is to these that we now turn. We do not, however, claim that the following list is exhaustive. Rather our claim is fairly modest. It is that these are the most common traits that easily come to mind when one thinks of the “state.” And these constitute a background against which theorising on the nature of the state takes place.

#### **5.3.1 Sovereignty**

A state is a sovereign entity. Sovereignty is a key attribute of the state. Francis H. Hinsley (1986:1) defines sovereignty as “the idea that there is a final and absolute authority in the political community,” with the proviso that “no final and absolute authority exists elsewhere.” The basic meaning of sovereignty (or autonomy) of the state, is that the state has exclusive control over a portion of the earth, over which it exercises jurisdiction and law enforcement, and whose integrity it is committed to protecting against encroachment from any other political power. Autonomy in fact means the ability to produce one's own rules - *auto nomos* in one's territory. Sovereignty is both internal and external. Internally it means that there is no authority higher than the state. The state's authority is final. The citizen



cannot appeal against the state to any other authority; the state is supreme and its will cannot be retracted (Gill 2003:5). The state has the final word. Each state has complete authority within its boundaries and no other actor may oppose the will of the sovereign state (Pierson 2004:10). Within its territory, the state has no rivals. Being sovereign, the state refuses to share its functions with others but concentrates all of them in its own hands. Graeme Gill (2003:4) notes that sovereignty is crucial to the state because it elevates the state to a position of superiority in the society and constitutes the recognition of its right to make binding decisions upon those who live within its bounds. Within its realm, its authority is exclusive and the state claims to be the ultimate and sole source of political power.

Externally, sovereignty means that other states recognise the authority of a state within its borders and accept that that state can speak for and act on behalf its citizens in international affairs (Gill 2003:5). External sovereignty is the international recognition of the domestic sovereignty of a particular state (Gill 2003:5). It is a claim of independence of states from one another. States, even sworn enemies, acknowledge one another's existence, at least through their own understanding of their boundaries and jurisdiction. Relations between states are not structured, monitored and sanctioned by a higher power, for no such power exists: the state is the highest level locus of power present in the modern political environment (Poggi 1990:24). Sovereignty, James N. Danziger (1991:131) argues, is the key element in the legal concept of the state and is a basic assumption of international politics and is reflected in a fundamental principle of the UN - the sovereign equality of all member states. This essentially means that before international law, Zimbabwe is equal to Britain, Holland, Israel and China, for example.

While sovereignty has legal standing and moral force in international law, the reality of international politics, however, is that a state's sovereign rights depend ultimately on sufficient power to enforce the state's position. It is not likely that, when major national interests are at stake, China will yield to Burundi merely on the state's sovereign rights. Immanuel M. Wallerstein (1993:502), in similar vein, argues that no state in the interstate system, even the single most powerful one at any given time, is totally autonomous – but obviously some enjoy far greater autonomy than others. This is why, for example, the United States could invade Iraq and Afghanistan in spite of their presumed sovereignty. In the world of states, the powerful “core” states tend to violate other states' sovereignty.

With the emergence of the sovereign state, international relations, that is, relations between states, became possible. Prior to this, there was no foreign affairs or distinction between internal and external. The pre-modern polities such as Babylon, Egypt, Assyria, Rome and Greece, did not see themselves as existing side by side with other such entities and as making up with these a wider system analogous to the state system, rather each empire saw itself as having political charge of the world as it conceived of it (Poggi 1990:25). This claim of sovereignty is a distinguishing feature of the state vis-à-vis pre-modern polities.

### **5.3.2 Citizenship**

A key feature of the state is a new type of political relationship – citizenship. According to Poggi (1990:28), citizenship means that individuals at large possess (among others) specifically political capacities, interests and preferences, the exercise of which allows them to affect to a greater or lesser extent the content of state activity. It entails rights and privileges as well as duties and obligations vested in individuals with respect to the state. Gill (2003:196) adds that citizenship is not simply a political category, but implies a whole range of social and economic rights and responsibilities as well as those that inhabit the political arena. The state expects and demands the loyalty of its citizens and inhabitants of its territory. Citizenship also entails participation. Generally, citizens have a right to actively participate in certain aspects of the state's activity (e.g. electoral participating).

Although the notion of citizenship was known since ancient times, it was however a socially restrictive concept which, before the advent of democratic politics, was used to exclude a substantial percentage of the population from participating in political life (Gill 2003:194). Only with the French Revolution did it take on a mass, national character. Even then, this mass character had little substance until democratic politics transformed the state political process. Citizenship was devoid of meaning if it did not entail participation in the political life of the state. The advent of democratic politics expanded participation to all social classes and from then citizenship as a socially inclusive concept made sense. The state-populace relationship was fundamentally altered such that the affairs of the state came to be considered as relevant not only to the society's power elites but to every member of the state. Every adult member had a right to have a say over the decisions made by the rulers. The state ceased to be a class-based concept and instead became a mass concept, just as earlier it had been transformed from a royal elite concept into a national concept (Gill 2003:195).

Until recently, citizenship was typically exclusive, that is, one belonged to and swore allegiance to one and only one state. To this day, a number of states still do not allow multiple citizenship. Citizenship is not always easily renounced. Some states forbid or limit emigration, and for others citizenship is inalienable (Morris 2002:15). Citizenship is, for the most part, not fully optional. It is difficult not to be a member of some state. Citizens of a state are the main subjects of its laws and are obliged to obey them by virtue of their membership.

### **5.3.3 Territoriality**

The state is a geo-political entity, which occupies a clearly defined physical space over which it claims sole legitimate authority. A state has an address. Poggi (1990:22) argues that the state does not *have* a territory, it *is* a territory. In other words, the state has territorial integrity. According to Danziger (1991:131), the doctrine of territorial integrity holds that a state has the right to resist and reject any aggression, invasion, or intervention within its boundaries. States wage war in defence of their territorial integrity, even at times over seemingly valueless tracts of land or uninhabitable islands, apparently oblivious to the costs and very limited benefits (Pierson 2004:9-10). States lay claim not just to jurisdiction over the land and the people who inhabit it, but also to the minerals that lie beneath it, the coastal waters that surround it, and the airspace above it (Pierson 2004:10).

The state exercises its authority only within its boundaries which are clearly defined and recognised internationally. But outside these boundaries, it possesses no authority. In principle, no state has authority in another state's boundaries. Domestic affairs of a state are a concern of that state only. Other states or groups of states have no jurisdiction in domestic affairs of that state. Its powers are exercised over all the people who live within its borders and no one else. The state's laws also apply to all who find themselves within its boundaries. Anyone who finds themselves within its borders is automatically under its jurisdiction and is under obligation to obey its laws. The borders of a state create an "inside" (us) and an "outside" (them).

The territorial basis of the state marks it from the pre-modern polities whose power and authority were more functionally than geographically defined. Governance was not territorial; it was largely "rule" over persons, *qua* individuals. Gill (2003:6) is particularly impressed by

the combination of sovereignty and territoriality that he argues that while many organisations claim sovereignty, in no other type of organisation apart from the state is this defined territorially. The territorial limits of premodern forms of socio-political organisation were set by ill-defined *frontiers* rather than by clearly demarcated *borders* (Giddens 1985:49-50). Their boundaries were not borders as such, but were mere frontiers which were determined by the fluid extent of their influence. Penetration of the “state” into the ruled was very weak. Political rule was concentrated at the centre while the periphery was more a source of tribute than the object of permanent and tightly managed administration. Friedrich Kratochwil (1986:35-36) adds:

Imperial boundaries did not operate to demarcate areas of exclusive jurisdiction on the basis of shared practices and mutual recognition of rights, but to keep the environment safe through the establishment of clients and the control of trade.

Local governance systems had considerable autonomy as long as the subjects remained loyal to the centre, satisfying and honouring its political and economic expectations.

As discussed with reference to the notion of sovereignty, territoriality is not cast in stone. A state’s defence of its territorial integrity at times depends on its capacity and political power. Wars are often fought over borders, with one state claiming quasi-jurisdictional interests beyond its borders.

#### **5.3.4 Monopoly of the legitimate use of violence**

As already mentioned, for Weber, what distinguishes the state from any other organisation is its monopoly of the legitimate use of force and coercion in its jurisdiction. This is what Vladimir I Lenin (cited in Poggi 1990:73) had in mind when he characterised the states as “bodies of armed men” and when he declared “a standing army and police are the chief instruments of state power” (cited in Skocpol 1979:26). Collins (1975:181) also defines the state with reference to the way in which violence is organised. For him, the state consists in individuals in possession of firearms and other weaponry and willing to put them to use and these individuals claim the monopoly of such use. The state is, in the first instance, the army and the police (Collins 1975:181). If it is to stay in business, a state must have organised military might, for establishing and maintaining its status externally as a sovereign entity

among others on the international scene (Poggi 1990:73). The state's monopoly of the means of violence means that domestically, it must also be able to enforce its commands, and prevent its members from using violence against one another in their private spaces. The instruments of violence are there to support its legitimacy if it is questioned and to ensure observance of the laws and the maintenance of order when they are infringed.

Peter Berger (1963:69) adds his voice:

The ultimate and, no doubt, the oldest means of social control is physical violence . . . Even in the politely operated societies of modern democracies the ultimate argument is violence. No state can exist without a police force or its equivalent in armed might. This ultimate violence may not be used frequently. There may be innumerable steps in its application, in the way of warnings and reprimands. But if all the warnings are disregarded, even in so slight a matter as paying a traffic ticket, the last thing that will happen is that a couple of cops show up at the door.

Apart from this dominance of force, what distinguishes the state from other polities that might use violence is that the state possesses a monopoly of the *legitimate* use of such coercion. The use of violence is legitimate only if it is either permitted or prescribed by the state. Only the state has the right to use violence to enforce the laws and decisions of society. Individuals are prevented from using violence because differences are settled by the state. Those who exercise violence within a state may do so only under the express permission of the state. Thus violence is "licensed" by the state.

### **5.3.5 Depersonalisation of power**

Political power in a state is depersonalised. This means that it is vested in offices rather than in persons as such. It means duties are done by individuals, not *qua* individuals, but in their capacity as office bearers. The office holders do not operate on their own behalf or own personal interests, but on behalf of the public interests their offices have been set up for (Poggi 1990:75). In short, the person acts on behalf of the state. An aspect of the depersonalisation of state power is the personification of the state. A state is personified when it is said to perform functions. That way, it is given a status which is equal to a subject which acts. For example, acts in law are attributed to the state as though it were a distinct entity acting. As a corporation, it has an independent persona, is recognised by law and capable of

behaving as if it were a person in making contracts, owning property, defending itself etc. (van Creveld 1999:416). The explanation of the personification of the state, argues Vincent (1987:8) lies in the fact that the individuals holding state offices do not (or should not) act in their private capacities and do not personally own their offices or the power, yet they still act for the state. Hence the more conventional term civil servant, or better still, “servant of the state.”

Because the state is depersonalised and bureaucratic, its institutions endure over time, in particular, they survive changes in leadership or government. Government is not the same as the state, but it carries the authority of the state. Distinguishing the state from the government allows the changes and removal of governments to proceed while still maintaining the continuity and legitimacy of the social order (Vincent 1987:31-32). If the two were identical, each removal of government would entail a crisis in the state. Vincent (1987:21) maintains that the really crucial formal feature of the state, which has most continuity and certainty in all states, is that it is a “continuous public power.” This understanding seems close to the etymology of the word “state,” from the Latin *stare*, to stand, and *status*, standing or position. *Status* also connotes stability or permanence, which is carried over into “estate”, the immediate ancestor of “state” (Morris 2002:37).

This state structure is not a monolithic machine, but a mishmash of institutions, agencies, organisations and bodies. As the public power, the state symbolises offices and roles which carry the authority of the state. Most states are functionally divided into executive, judiciary and legislative arms, while each of these is further divided into distinct units and departments. The institutions do not themselves constitute the state; they are its agents. Though highly differentiated, the state structure is however, bound together by ties of centralism. In fact the state is a highly centralised means of administration and control. The different parts do not exercise their own authority, but only that authority which flows to them by virtue of being part of the state.

The depersonalisation of the state power means that the state is an abstract entity which is neither a single person nor a community; is not identical with either the rulers or the ruled (van Creveld 1999:1). On the other hand, it includes them both and claims to stand over them both (van Creveld 1999:1), but it is independent of and separate from both (Bartelson 2001:34). It is distinct from its agents and institutions. The state is a bureaucratic form of

organisation in which relations of authority are hierarchical. Its offices and institutions are structured in a clearly defined hierarchy with clear lines of accountability. This bureaucratic organisation is run by formal rules designed to ensure its smooth functioning. Office holders are professional full-time officials. The structure is characterised by specialisation and organisational differentiation from other bodies. There are objective rules and standards that are meant to be applied in all decision-making so as to remove personal or partial considerations from the process.

The distinction between the person of the ruler and the office and institution he occupies is for Morris (2002:37) one of the features distinguishing modern polities from earlier kingships. Quentin Skinner (cited in Bartelson 2001:34) adds that what characterises the state is that its power, not that of the ruler is the basis of government. This in turn enables the state to be seen as the only source of law and legitimate force within its boundaries, and as the only object of its citizens' allegiances. Writing of Medieval Europe, Morris (2002:36) notes that political power was highly fragmented and decentralised. Allegiances were multiple, largely personal and no clear hierarchy of political authority was discernible. The complexity of relations of authority means that rule was, for the most part, indirect and institutions did not penetrate society in the ways characteristic of our states (Morris 2002:36). Considerable power was in the hands of local governors and administrators. Thus, governance was largely through intermediaries. Tilly (1975:24-25) also emphasises direct rule as a distinguishing feature of modern states. Direct rule is related to the penetration of society by the state. The state is relatively pervasive and it penetrates its area of jurisdiction legally and administratively in a way that earlier polities did not. In fact, notes Gill (2003:194), the 20th century saw the expansion of the state to its greatest limits, penetrating further into society and controlling more of the lives of the people who lived under it than ever before.

Paying particular attention to the notion of governance, Jean Dunbabin (1985:277) observes:

What distinguishes government (the state) from personal control is its unremitting character. To be governed is to be subjected to the regular pressure of an authority operating according to fixed rules. In the full sense of the word, it is arguable that nobody was governed before the late 19th century.

Unpacking the concept of depersonalisation of state power reveals the state as “a particular form of political organisation that constitutes a unitary public order distinct from and superior to both ruled and rulers, one that is capable of agency” (Morris 2002:45).

This brief exposition of the key features of the state - a sovereign entity, having authority over inhabitants of a defined territory, with a monopoly over the legitimate use of violence, a public order distinct from both the ruled and ruler, with highly centralised institutions - clearly confirms the modernity of the state and thus we cannot talk of a “state” earlier than the 16th century. Most scholars now agree that the state is a comparatively recent phenomenon in the history of human existence.

Since this work has a Marxist bias, we might need to pose for a moment to listen to what Marx and the various strands of Marxism have to say about the state.

## **5.4 Marxist understanding of the state**

Marx is one of the greatest and most influential theorists of all time and his insights on anything, including the state, is of interest. Yet he was by no means a great theorist of the state. He never undertook a comprehensive and systematic analysis of the state as such. It is extremely difficult to get a clear unitary theory of the state from the diverse writings of Marx and Engels. Vincent (1987:147-8) avers that the emphasis of Marxism has not been to understand the state *qua* state, but rather to explain it as a result of a more fundamental reality, which is economic in character. As a consequence, there is no scholarly agreement on what constitutes a Marxist theory of the state. To put it crudely, there is no such thing as orthodox Marxism. Poulantzas (1978:8) emphasises that no one can presume to behave as the keeper of holy Marxist dogmas and texts.

The debate on the Marxist state theory has given rise to a range of theories each of which is based on some understanding of the Marxist tradition, but differing in its understanding of what counts as Marx’s political writings. Attempts to arbitrate between the competing theories by returning to the Marxist classics are an exercise in futility, not only because the classical texts themselves are incomplete but also because they are vague and often self-contradictory (Mentan 2010:10). Thus, as long as Marx’s writings remain the point of reference for the development of state theory, a number of positions are tenable from within



the intellectual canon and the canon itself cannot provide a basis for arbitrating among the competing theories (Mentan 2010:10). Thus, there is no general Marxist theory of the state because there certainly can never be one (Poulantzas 1978:20).

#### **5.4.1 Origins of the state**

As noted in Chapter Two, the emergence of the state is traced by Marxists to the material and historical developments of human society. A fundamental weakness of most theories on the emergence of the state is the assumption that its rise is coterminous with the rise of a ruling class. In other words, they argue that as the elite forms, so does the state. The state in this case is equivalent to, and identical with, the ruling class. Far from it. The state is the product of particular social conditions, whereby society is divided into opposed social classes (Krader 1978:5). The ruling class did not arise with the state and cannot be identical to it. Rather the ruling class seized the machinery of state, sought to make itself identical with the state, and turned it into a weapon to exploit the lower class (Boer 2015:134). Lenin (cited in Boer 2015:134) argues that the state is a sign that class antagonisms cannot be reconciled. The fact that a state exists shows that class conflict is irreconcilable. The existence of the state is an admission that society has become entangled in an insoluble contradiction with itself that it has split into irreconcilable antagonisms which it is powerless to dispel (Pierson 2004:7). The state is a product of class conflict and not an imposition upon people from outside (Boer 2015:134). The state is not a means of mediating and bettering conflict to within acceptable limits. It is a sign that class antagonism between the economic interests of classes is beyond redemption. Given the irreconcilable conflict and the oppressive character of the social order, preservation of order is maintained against the interest of one class. Those who have seized the machinery of the state pretend to be there for the service of all. As an organ of class domination and oppression of one class by another, it aims to create an “order” which legalises and perpetuates this oppression by moderating the collisions between classes (Lenin 1932:9). Thus from this we can deduce that for a state to emerge, society ought to be stratified. This will lead to conflict between the elites and the lower classes. The state then emerges out of the conflict between the two classes. The ruling elite use it to preserve their own class interests at the expense of the lower class.

## **5.4.2 Nature of the state**

As noted above, the discussion on the nature of the state within Marxism has produced a wide range of competing theories. Jessop (2012:4) notes that different Marxist approaches locate the bases of class power primarily in the social relations of production, in control over the state, or in intellectual hegemony over hearts and minds. There is, for example, no consensus on the relationship of the state to social classes. Is the state captured by one social class that uses it to further its own ends at the expense of other social classes, or it is an autonomous entity which has its own interests? If the former, how does the state capture and maintain their hold on the state and how is it that the other social classes accept the status quo? In short, what is the relationship between the state, power and social classes?

### **5.4.2.1 Instrumentalism**

The first understanding of the relationship between the state, power and social classes is instrumentalism which sees the state mainly as a neutral tool for exercising political power. Whatever class that controls this tool will use it to advance its own interests. Instrumentalists regard the state as a “state *in* capitalist society”. Miliband (1969:23) argues that the ruling class of a capitalist society, by virtue of the economic power emanating from its ownership and control of the means of production, is able to use the state as an instrument for its domination of society. The state has no existence, purpose or interests of its own, independent of those of the dominant class and it is thus a product of class interest rather than an organisation with its own independent purpose (Gill 2003:10). The apparent neutrality of the state is seen as functional for capitalism because it masks the exploitation of a class-divided society, and in crisis situations, the state’s repressive nature against the working class and marginal sectors of capital in favour of monopoly capital is always revealed (Cox 1985:65).

One important point of this critique of the state, notes Jens Bartelson (2001:118) is to demonstrate that the state is not an embodiment of universal interest, but is ultimately derivative and expressive of certain interests in society, in this case, economic interests of the ruling class. The view that the state is a neutral entity which stands for the general interest is not just an illusion, but part of the politico-philosophical folklore used by the dominant class

to legitimise its dominance and to reproduce the mode of production that makes its dominance possible (Bartelson 2001:127).

Jessop (2012:7) maintains that the state itself has no inherently capitalist form and performs no necessarily capitalist functions despite the dominance of capitalist relations of production. Any functions that the state performs for capital are because pro-capitalist forces happen to control the state and/or because securing social order also happens to secure key conditions for rational economic calculation (Jessop 2012:7). If that same state apparatus were to be found in a different system and controlled by other forces, it would perform different functions. Poulantzas (1978:12) sees instrumentalism as viewing the state as equivalent to political domination in the sense that each dominant class constructs a state according to its requirements, bending it at will to suit its own interests, thus making every state merely a “class dictatorship.” It is a bendable instrument that is controlled by external forces to achieve their ends. There is very little, if any, autonomy because the state is captured and turns to the ends of its captors.

Engels (cited in Mentan 2010:5) avers that the state, ever since its origins, was always the state of the dominant class, and its main purpose was to secure the rule of that particular class. The state in the era of globalisation is the state of the dominant class – the big capitalists - and it is overtly a defender of the capitalist system. Even when the state may appear to have a degree of political neutrality, adds Andrew Cox et al. (1985:66), this is just a deception to mask the dominance of the state by the interests of the dominant class. The state under capitalism is thus nothing but an instrument for the exploitation and repression of the working class to ensure class domination. It is a repressive tool serving the interests of the ruling class. In Marx’s own words (cited in Cox 1985:53), “the executive of the modern state is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie.” Karl Kautsky, once described by Lenin as the “Pope of Marxism”, shares the same view arguing that “the modern state is pre-eminently the instrument intended to guard the interests of the ruling class” (Pierson 2004:60).

Miliband (1970:49), like many Marxists, denies the reality of the state, arguing that what the state stands for is a number of particular institutions - the government, the judiciary, the administrative apparatus, and parliamentary assemblies, etc. - which, together, constitute its

reality, and which interact as parts of what may be called the state system. For him “state power” lies in these institutions, and it is through them that power is wielded, in its different manifestations by the people who occupy the leading positions in each of these institutions (Miliband 1970:54). In this sense, the state serves the interests of the economically dominant class, which controls the civil bureaucracy as well as the military and police apparatus. In pursuing its policy, the state becomes fully guided by the interests of this class. In short, instrumentalism argues that state actions directly serve the interests of the ruling elites. The assumption that government is an autonomous, monolithic, self-contained organism, that political power always checkmates economic power by intervening on the side of the underdog is untenable and unfortunately no more than a fond hope (Mandel 1974:510-11). The state is then clearly the instrument of rule by the dominant capitalist class.

However, some scholars within the Marxist tradition feel uncomfortable with this crude, directly instrumental approach. According to Gill (2003:10), reducing the state to a manifestation of deeper social forces, is misleading. He writes:

Certainly there will be instances when the state is used by other groups for their own ends. The state can be captured by particular groups and their agenda imposed upon it; but this does not happen all the time (Gill 2003:10).

The state has the potential for pursuing policies that are in its own interest or that are in the interests of the broader society. The state's quest for order and peace may encourage it to make concessions to lower classes at the expense of dominant classes, while its desire for external security may lead it into policies which will negatively impact the dominant class or may even lead it to restructure domestic society in order to effectively compete internationally (Gill 2003:10). State and dominant class interests do not always coincide, and the state has the capacity to maintain its autonomy. Furthermore, there are also situations when the state acts as more of an arbiter between competing groups instead of pursuing its own policies. Thus in principle the state is an autonomous entity which remains so unless and until it is captured by some sectional forces.

In critiquing the instrumentalist view, Skocpol (1979:27) argues that the state has interests of its own not necessarily equivalent to the interests of the dominant class in society. She goes

on to argue that instrumentalism makes it virtually impossible even to raise the possibility that fundamental conflicts of interest might arise between the existing dominant class or set of groups, on the one hand, and the state rulers on the other (Miliband 1983:65).

#### **5.4.2.2 Relative autonomy of the state**

Not content with viewing the state as a mere instrument to serve the interests of those who own the means of production, Poulantzas, in his theory of the “relative autonomy of the state”, notes that the state may indeed have a degree of autonomy from the interests of the ruling class, but, nevertheless, it remains for all practical purposes the state of the ruling class (Miliband 1983:64). Poulantzas’ formulation regards the state as having only a *relative* autonomy and never a true autonomy. True autonomy cannot be possible. The state is regarded as a capitalist state because it has an *inherently* capitalist form and therefore functions on behalf of capital. Whoever controls the state is irrelevant because it embodies a prior in-built bias towards capital and against the subaltern classes. The very structure of the state means that it organises capital and disorganises the working class. The relative autonomy of the state is in fact functionally necessary because of the institutional separation of polity and economy in capitalism.

While recognising that policies against the dominant class and other sections of capital were possible, Poulantzas insisted that when this occurs it would always be functional for the long term survival and hegemony of monopoly capital (Cox 1985:70). He argues that in the short term, the dominant class might lose out to reformist political movements, or even to genuinely revolutionary working class movements, but in the final analysis, these attacks on the nature of capitalism would be defeated due to structural and ideological constraints operating to preserve capitalism (Cox 1985:70). The state may sometimes act against the immediate economic interests of the dominant class when the needs of long-term capital accumulation require an economic price to be paid (Pierson 2004:62).

As Miliband has done, so does Poulantzas, proclaim the unreality of the state. Observes Abram (1977:72):

It is not for him (Poulantzas) a ‘real, concrete singular’ object, not something that exists ‘in the strong sense of the term’. Rather, it is an abstraction the

conceptualisation of which is a ‘condition of knowledge of real-concrete objects’. In this context we might say that the state is the distinctive collective misrepresentation of capitalist societies. Like other collective (mis)representations it is a social fact - but not a fact in nature. Social facts should not be treated as things.

#### **5.4.2.3 Hegemony**

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas. The class, which is the ruling material force in society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it,

so wrote Marx in *The German Ideology* (cited in Miliband 1970:250). In the same work he speaks of intellectuals as the thinkers of the dominant class; its active, conceptive ideologists

who make the perfecting of the illusion of the class about itself their chief source of livelihood, that illusion being the view of its interest as the common interest of all members of society, put in an ideal form; it [the ruling class] will give its ideas the form of universality, and represent them as the only rational, universally valid ones.

Impressed by the significance and impact of ideas in a mode of production, Antonio Gramsci conceived the state as an instrument in the hands of the dominant capitalist class and for serving its purposes, but he expanded the means of social control to include ideological means alongside the coercive ones. He introduced the concept of “hegemony”, by which he meant “a mode of social control through which one group exerts its dominance over others by means of ideology” (Mentan 2010:12). Gramsci argued that class domination is achieved through a multidimensional process of coercion and consent. For him states are based on variable combinations of force and hegemony. While force involves the use of a coercive apparatus to bring the dominated classes into conformity and acquiescence with the requirements of a specific mode of production, he argued, hegemony involves the successful mobilisation and reproduction of the active consent of subaltern groups by the ruling class through the use of intellectual, moral and political persuasion and leadership (Jessop 2012:9).

While coercion secures state domination over society, for Gramsci (cited in Mentan:2010:12), it does not however, secure state hegemony. To achieve hegemony over society, coercion should be complimented by ideological means of domination. Only this would enable the state to gain the support of the subordinated groups. Hegemony, for Gramsci, represents a discreet form of domination. The bourgeois system's real strength does not lie in the violence of the ruling class or the cohesive power of its state apparatus, but in the acceptance by the ruled of the conception of the world which belongs to the rulers (Fiori 1970:238). The masses are co-opted and suppressed by means of ideational domination. Bourgeois hegemony shapes the personal beliefs, convictions, norms and aspirations of the proletariat. An ideological consent can, thus be acquired without any force. Gramsci was not so much interested in whether the base determines the superstructure or the other way round. Rather, he attempted to subtly integrate consciousness with materialism.

Gramsci's point of emphasis is that ideology plays an important role in determining economic structures and that bourgeois society is not simply controlled by brute force, but by consent. Bourgeoisie ideology is internalised by the masses to occasion consent and legitimisation. In his definition of the state, the idea of active consent comes out clearly. He defines the state as "the entire complex of practical and theoretical activities with which the ruling class not only justifies and maintains its dominance but manages to win the active consent of those over whom it rules" (Miliband 1971:244). The state is, therefore, not just an apparatus for domination, Vincent (1987:167) explains, but it is a vehicle of intellectual dominance which actually produces a response from the masses.

Class struggle is also clearly noticeable in the realm of ideas. The state is a site of struggle for intellectual ideas and debate. The war of ideas is as significant as any class conflict in the factory. Revolution did not mean outright confrontation, but is rather an intellectual scheme. Each class produces its own intellectuals who formulate its own ideas about self-consciousness. The bourgeois hegemony ought to be countered intellectually by proletarian hegemony. The emphasis on the role of ideas and human consciousness and their effect on the economic base of society, make up Gramsci's distinct contribution to the Marxist discussion on state, power and social classes.

### **5.4.3 Criticism of Marxist understandings of the state**

We have already noted the critique of instrumentalism. However, most of the criticisms of Marxist conception of the state are applicable to virtually all the various strands of Marxism. Jessop (2012:13) argues that in privileging class domination, Marxists marginalise other forms of social domination, for example, patriarchal, ethnic, racial, hegemonic masculinities, interstate, regional or territorial, among others. Marxist analyses are also criticised for exaggerating the structural coherence of class domination while being blind to its disjunctures and contradictions. The idea of a unified ruling class contradicts the messiness of actual configurations of class power (Jessop 2012:13). This messiness and complexity is often ignored by Marxist theorists. Marxist understandings of the state are also accused of being extremely reductive in that they conceive the nature of the state-society relationship to be rooted in the economic structure (Mentan 2010:14). Bo Strath and Rolf Torstendahl (cited in Mentan 2010:14) argue that the form of any state is not the outcome of the interest of a specific class or that of state agents. For them, the state cannot be reduced to the interest of state agents, rather, the form of the state is the outcome of the reciprocal influences of social classes and social agents. This means that the state is influenced by the interest of different classes within society. Thus for them while the state is autonomous, it is also influenced by society (Mentan 2010:14).

## **5.5 Future of the state**

The coming of globalisation ignited a debate on the resilience of the state. Some scholars argued that some super-national forces would take over the role of the state, while others felt that the state would survive the onslaught of globalisation.

### **5.5.1 Theory of state decline**

There has been a litany of eulogies on the state: the crisis of the state, the decline of the state, the eclipse of the state, the retreat of the state and even the end of the state. The central theme of all these works is that the states have lost control of their territorial boundaries, national economies, currencies, and even their cultures and languages and that power is shifting from the state to the global markets, transnational corporations (TNCs), and international channels of communication (Mentan 2010:24). Writing at the beginning of the century, Bartelson



(2001:1) observed a widespread conviction that the sovereign state is unlikely to remain the main source of political authority in the future. He observed that the state seemed challenged by new forms of authority and community which go beyond the divide between the domestic and the international, and that it would ultimately be replaced by new forms of political life. Singing from the same hymn sheet, others have argued that globalisation is undermining states and seems to cast doubt over the future of the state (Cerny, 1996; Ohmae, 1995; Castells 1996, 1997, 1998). Globalisation seems to threaten and undermine state autonomy and even eliminate the need for the state altogether.

Critics of globalisation argue strongly that global and other transnational forces are increasingly usurping the power of states to determine their own fiscal and economic policies with states increasingly reduced to adjusting their national economic activities to the pressures of the global economy. Policy options available to states are also said to be severely restricted. Through removing the boundaries of states as real obstacles to the flow of capital, commodities and ideas led by TNCs, it is becoming increasingly difficult for individual states to regulate the economic activity that goes on within their jurisdictions. In a way, the state is increasingly unable to determine the fate of its own citizens. Decisions made in corporate headquarters in the rich Western states about where to invest or where to withdraw investment from can have enormous consequences for national economies in terms of the balance of payments, employment, economic growth and even survivability (Gill 2003:228). Such decisions are made without considering the best interests of the peripheral country but of the corporations. More often than not, TNCs have an upper hand in dealing with states. Writing about trade blocs such as the EU and the TNCs, Ronald Steel (1997:5) argues that they are:

little more than giant trade groups whose purpose is to increase the flow of commerce. They do this by eliminating government regulations and ignoring international frontiers. Their purpose is to make governments irrelevant. What is novel about them, and a telling mark of their power, is that they have enlisted governments to do this work for them. Governments are being reduced to the role of traffic cops, ensuring that everyone follows the regulations that are, of course, written by and for the most powerful corporations.

The role of TNCs is thus seen as denying states the power to decide the sort of economic activity that is conducted within their boundaries and under what conditions. By handing over their power to TNCs, states give up much of the capacity to structure their trade profiles.

Added to these, Richard F Schultz (1995:76) observed an increase in the visibility of several non-state actors which include extreme ethno-nationalist movements, religious radicals, local militias, international criminal organisations and terrorist organisations, among others, some of which effectively defy and openly challenge government sovereignty in many parts of the world. He concluded that these developments result in the disintegration of state structures and authority, growing instability, and the inability of the states to govern (Schultz 1995:76). Accordingly, globalisation is viewed as compromising the authority, the autonomy, the nature and the competence of the state and by so doing it reduces the effectiveness of government which, in turn, undermines the legitimacy and authority of the state (McGrew 1992:87ff). In the end, we may soon not need states.

### **5.5.2 Theory of the resilience of the state**

The theory of the resilience of the state points to global problems such as increasing economic and social inequality, persistent international financial instability, and global environmental and demographic pressures, and argues that the state is the only force that can provide the structures of authority necessary to cope with the persistent claims of competing societal groups and to ensure social justice and sustainable development essential to public order and stability (Yannis 2003:66).

State resilience theorists have challenged the claim that globalisation is in any real sense toppling the power of the states. While not necessarily denying the power of TNCs, they maintain that this does not, however, necessarily mean a decline in a state's activity, let alone lead to the death of the state. Tatah Mentan (2010:24) argues on the contrary that states are the principal agents of globalisation as well as the guarantors of the political and material conditions necessary for global capital accumulation and movement. The forces of globalisation are heavily dependent on the state for their ability to function and their sustenance. Gill (2003:248) emphasises that the markets, TNCs, Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs), media companies and all the other institutions that push globalisation need to have some guarantees from the state that their investment is safe. Perhaps more importantly, states are also crucial in the operation, and at times success, of these forces.

TNCs are reliant upon states for some of the means by which they function: law and order, the stabilisation of property rights, communications infrastructure, preparation of labour supply (through education and training), and economic support (Gill 2003:248). Thus the corporations which are at the heart of globalisation, both in its economic and ideological strands, rely upon their respective states not only for their basic conditions of existence, but for their very capacity to pursue global strategies (Gill 2003:248). States actually help to structure the way globalisation operates.

Mann (1993) cautions against the belief that a change in the international circumstances in which states operate is part of a process whose end will be “the death of the state”. He admits that states have certainly lost many of their capacities, but adds that the state remains the single largest and most decisive economic factor. States have become important economic actors in terms of ownership, production, employment, regulation and redistribution. Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson (1995) doubt that there really is a new phenomenon of “globalisation,” insisting that states have always faced powerful transnational forces and that in spite of these, they retain significant governing capacities and policy discretion. Furthermore, there are a couple of strategic areas of state activity, such as military and national security, in which the “withdrawal” of the state is much less marked. In the conduct of military and national security policy, the state remains fiercely jealous of its sovereign powers (Pierson 2004:175). Eric Hobsbawm (1994:577) argues that a major lesson of the past century is that the state or some other form of public authority representing the public interest, is more indispensable than ever if the social and environmental iniquities of the market economy were to be countered or even if the economic system was to operate satisfactorily.

There is plenty of evidence for the lasting importance of the state in its traditional form. Globalisation will not lead to the death of the state for states are still important for it to function. It is clear that states are far from withering away even though they do operate within a significantly reconfigured landscape (Pierson 2004:163). States are diversifying and developing. Though they now exercise much less control over their external economic environment, it seems far-fetched to argue for the withering of the state. Undoubtedly, “the death of the state” is an immeasurably long way off. The state is not going away.

## **5.6 Conclusion**

In this chapter we have looked at the emergence of the state, its nature and future. The characteristics of the state: sovereignty, citizenship, territoriality and depersonalisation of power differentiate the state from ancient pre-modern polities. We have also discussed the Marxist conception of the state. Using the common threads of the Marxist understandings, we will see in the next chapter how the state has been used by the African elites that control state power and their financial backers and the owners of capital to advance their own interests. Having done this, we now set out in the next chapter to analyse the political economy of post-colonial Africa.

## **CHAPTER SIX: POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POST-COLONIAL AFRICA**

### ***6.0 Introduction***

On 6 March 1957, Ghana gained independence. It was a watershed date that marked the beginning of a new era for Africa. Ghana's independence was watched and admired around the globe. No other African event had previously attracted such attention. Nor was there an occasion when the excitement was so strong. Ghana convinced and inspired the rest of the continent that colonialism can and must be defeated. The winds of change gathered momentum throughout the continent. One country after the other threw away the yoke of colonialism amid much euphoria and to the world's ovation. One by one, the African new states emerged. For some it was through a hard fought all-out-war while for others it was partly through negotiation and popular pressure. South Africa would be the last to throw away the chains of apartheid, some thirty-seven years after Ghana attained independence. The liberation of Africa from imperialism was apparently over.

But the euphoria of independence was not going to last forever as the independent states came face-to-face with the reality of nation and state building. The difficulties ahead were overwhelming. Sooner rather than later a mood of despondency about Africa had taken hold. In quick succession, the post-independence states succumbed to military coups and dictatorships, to periods of excessive violence and to economic collapse. One after the other, African leaders failed to deliver programmes to alleviate the plight of their people. The freedom which many a citizen had dreamt of and had suffered for, had all but evaporated like morning dew. What may account for this sorry state that the continent has found itself in not long after independence? Could it be that there were structural issues within the state system as such that made failure inevitable? Was it because of some inbuilt characteristics of the African societies themselves that undermined nation and state building even before they got off the ground? Could it be because of sabotage from the former colonial masters?

In this chapter we look at the political economy of post-colonial Africa. We are interested in the drama that has been unfolding in the political economy of the continent since the beginning of the post-colonial period. Interest is also in the external constraints to development that ensured that the African states did not completely shake off the chains of

colonialism. It is not scholarly honest to blame all the problems of the continent on the internal systems and weaknesses. This chapter is basically an overview which will set the scene for the discussion on the post-colonial Zimbabwean political economy in Chapter 7. The chapter makes extensive use of the excellent voluminous journalistic work of Martin Meredith (2005). Before an exposition of the political economy of post-colonial Africa, we will give a brief overview of the pre-colonial Africa, the scramble for Africa by the European imperialists, and the situation of Africa under colonialism. This is done to show the historical roots of the crisis that post-colonial Africa would struggle with.

### ***6.1 Overview of pre-colonial African governance systems***

Before colonialism, the vast continent of Africa was not a *tabula rasa*. It was inhabited by over a hundred million people (MacKenzie 1983:1) of many ethno-linguistic groups organised in a variety of socio-political systems. More than 2 000 languages were in use in pre-colonial Africa. Some societies were large empires with complex systems of government ruled by kings some of whom had near absolute powers. Egypt, Nubia, Axum, Songhai and Munhumutapa were some of the pre-colonial empires. The king was the chief executive, chief law-maker, and chief judge (Mentan 2010:21). Given the size of the empires, the monarch had advisors and other officials who helped him carry out his functions. Like other empires elsewhere, large and powerful African kingdoms could collapse or weaken due to a variety of reasons, such as weak leadership, internal insurrection, loss of an important source of power or attack from outside aggressors.

Over and above large empires some societies were organised in smaller centralised polities which resembled the empires in the system and practice of governance and concentration of power in the hands of a monarch and a tiny upper class (Mentan 2010:21). Maintenance of these smaller polities was dependent on the kingdom's ability to have a strong military, a tax apparatus and control of trade, where it existed. Many Africans lived in "stateless" societies, that is, societies without a well-defined and complex or centralised governance system. Mentan (2010:22) suggests that about a third of Africans lived in stateless societies when the coloniser arrived. These were a kind of pre-colonial democracies in which the elders held social, economic, and political power. Some were governed by a council of elders that was composed of the influential elderly people in the community. Although some of the stateless societies had a system of chiefs, most of them actually did not. Chiefs were usually chosen by

the elders of the community on the basis of their reputation of contributing to the common good (Mentan 2010:23). As such, chiefs in such societies were more or less ceremonial leaders. Where there was no chief, a council of elders governed the community. Stateless societies had checks and balances that ensured that no one person or group gained too much power over others. Organised in clans and tribes and operating on the basis of social norms, stateless societies, like pre-state Israel, had an arsenal of mechanisms that ensured that law and order were upheld in society as well as social safety nets that ensured that the vulnerable were taken care of and that no one starved. Colonialism decimated all that.

## ***6.2 The scramble for Africa***

Prior to the end of the nineteenth century, Europeans viewed most of Africa as “empty”, legally *res nullius*, a no-man’s land (Pakenham 1991:xv). They had known only small and isolated trading posts on the coast line. Their knowledge of the vast African inland was very limited. Africa to them was more of a coastline than a continent (Meredith 2005:1). But all that was to change. After several centuries of dealing with the African coastline, European imperialists suddenly moved in to take control of virtually the entire continent and politicians, who had hitherto resisted the temptation to move into Africa, suddenly embarked on an uneasy task of partitioning its territory (MacKenzie 1983:2). They moved onto the continent which to them was filled with empty spaces and occupied it in virtually its entirety. John M. MacKenzie (1983:2) argues that the scramble for Africa was the most dramatic instance of the partition of the world, and it sent out political, economic and social shock waves, which are felt on the continent to this day. Mentan (2010:23) avers that the changes brought by colonialism explain why the history of Africans is integrally linked with the history of colonialism.

Already there were growing tensions and rivalries among European imperialists over territories. Concerned that inter-imperialist rivalry could lead to outright conflict on the continent, Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor, called and hosted the notorious Berlin Conference in 1885 to bring order to the land grabbing proceedings. The colonisation of Africa was a manifestation of the extension of competition between the European states beyond Europe and local European conflicts were now being played out on a global scale (Gill 2003:192). The aim of the conference, according to Mentan (2010:28), was to ensure each imperialist power an unimpeded and unmonitored freedom to loot as much as they could

in their assigned territory. In this land scramble, imperialist states hoped to increase their power, wealth and prestige. Africa was sliced up like a cake, the pieces swallowed by five rival nations (Pakenham 1991:xv). In spite of being such a momentous initiative for the continent, not a single African was invited to the conference.

The maps that the negotiators used to slice up Africa were largely inaccurate; large areas were described as *terra incognita* (unknown land) and they often resorted to drawing straight lines on the blank map, totally disregarding traditional monarchies, chiefdoms and other African societies that were in existence (Meredith 2005:328). Straight lines based on geographical lines of latitude and longitude, formed over a third of the continent's borders. Arcs were also frequently used. In most cases, societies were torn apart, tribes and nations were separated with imperial contempt. For example, the Bakongo people were divided into three: French Congo, Belgian Congo and Portuguese Angola; Somaliland was also divided into three with each of the three powers - Britain, Italy and France - taking its loot (Meredith 2005:1). No less than 190 cultural and linguistic groups were dissected by the colonisers. Hundreds of diverse, independent and unrelated social units, with no common history, culture, language or religion, some of which were fighting each other were put in the same territory. For example, Nigeria contained as many as 250 ethno-linguistic groups which had virtually nothing in common, putting together Muslim and Christian populations in covert hostility. The hostilities between the Buganda and Bunyoro in Uganda were not considered as they became fellow citizens in the same territory. Belgian officials identified six thousand chiefdoms in Belgian Congo (Meredith 2005:1). In Rhodesia the Ndebele and Shona were put in one territory in spite of the hostility between them.

When the dust of the scramble had settled, more than ten million square miles of African soil, tens of thousands of its polities and over one hundred million peoples had fallen to European rule and had been re-grouped into forty colonies and protectorates in little over a decade (MacKenzie 1983:1; Meredith 2005:2). Overnight, formerly hostile and antagonistic groups became fellow citizens. Blood relatives found themselves living on different sides of the border, as citizens of different countries. Existing kingdoms and empires were obliterated by the destructive swipes of the colonial machine gun. The Basuto, Tswana of Bechuanaland, and the Swazi begged the Queen of England for her protection fearful of the encroachment of white settlers into their kingdoms and became protectorates. With the defeat of the Germans



in the First World War, its colonies were shared out among Britain, France, Belgium and the Union of South Africa (Meredith 2005:7).

Africans in most parts of the continent resisted European occupation. Resistance in Kumasi was brutally suppressed by the British. Samori Touré of the Mandingo Empire waged a long remarkable campaign of close to a decade against the French. The Shona and Ndebele fought tenaciously against white settlers in what became known as *Chimurenga/Umvukela*. The worst form of savage brutality was shown by the Germans in South West Africa, where they annihilated more than 75% of the Herero people to stamp out resistance between 1904 and 1908 in what qualifies to be the first genocide of the last century. Resistance against European occupation continued for decades to come. But the superior European fire power coupled with the sheer brutality of the imperialists won the day and consolidated the occupation of the territories. Dozens of resisting African leaders were killed during confrontations, while others were executed or sent into exile (Meredith 2005:3). By the 1930s, the whole continent, except for Ethiopia which successfully resisted Italian occupation, was under colonial rule. The conquest and occupation of Africa completed the enslavement of Africans which began two centuries earlier with the brutal and savage Atlantic slave trade (Brooke-Smith 1987:3). Thus were born the modern states of Africa. The state model of socio-political organisation developed in Western Europe was imposed on the continent. For the next century, Africa would be under the yoke of colonialism.

### ***6.3 Africa under colonialism***

While colonial rule did not last for long, its impact on the continent was devastating and is still being felt to this day. The aim of European imperialism on the continent has always been about economies of extraction requiring access to cheap labour and raw materials. The imperial bourgeoisie has always viewed Africa as simply a geographic terrain that offers opportunities for the prosperity of global capitalism. The colonial state was set up as an instrument for dominating and integrating the continent into the internal capitalist system through supplying it with raw materials (Mentan 2010:xi). Its aim was to advance the interests of the metropolitan bourgeoisie at the expense of the African. The colonial economy was designed to serve the needs and to meet the demands of industrialising Europe (Gill 2003:191). As a result, the colonisation of Africa substantially contributed to the prosperity

of Europe. As Mentan (2010:28) points out, Africa bled so that Europe could have a river of wealth flowing through her.

Political and economic life in the colonies was shaped by structures imposed by the colonial powers. The colonies as part of the empire were tied together into a system with its centre in the imperial power and whose rationale was the prosperity of the imperial power. In this sense, all structures and processes in the colonies were shaped by imperial imperatives, and all were part of the one system (Gill 2003:192). Mentan (2010:24) argues that the prime legacy of colonialism was the integration of colonies into the international capitalist economy. Since then, the extroversion of Africa, whereby its economy was oriented to meet the needs of other people in other places continues to this day (Carmody 2011:3).

With the partition of Africa, the formerly disparate tribes and social groupings merged into pseudo-states. The imposition of the Westphalian state system resulted in the wiping out of existing African kingdoms and empires as viable forms of socio-political organisation. Africa's traditional structures were undermined, ignored or looked down upon with disdain as the colonialists imposed theirs. The majority of the inhabitants did not identify with the states and did not have a say whatsoever in their governance. The people never dialogued their differences as a basis for federating. They never talked to each other about a political union. They woke up one morning and saw themselves conscripted into geo-political constructs they never chose nor bargained for (Mentan 2010:29).

The collective African psyche was deformed and ripped apart, something from which it is yet to recover. Indigenous peoples were not only dispossessed of their lands but also of their histories. The histories and cultures of African people were demonised and labelled inferior, backward, peripheral, and doomed to extinction, "by the dogma of colonialist notions of progress and civilisation" (Tauli-Corpuz 1993:10). In fact pre-colonial Africa was regarded as pre-historic and so the history of Africa became "the history of the white man in Africa". Africa's cultures experienced the trauma of rapid and enforced change which often tied Africa with unavoidable bonds of dependence. The African had to forfeit his language and adopt the coloniser's. Europeans decided how best they could break down traditional social and economic networks for more efficient social control and resource extraction (Mentan 2010:169).

Colonialism, by and large, involves the brutal conquest of one people by another. The European colonial capitalist state was not a neutral institution. If we are to apply the structuralist understanding of the state (as discussed in Chapter 5), we would view the colonial state as having an *inherently* capitalist bias. The agencies of the state (army, police, government departments, judiciary and parliament) were never neutral bodies governing in the interests of all. Rather they were at the service of monopoly capital and could not even hide their bias. Colonialism created an exceedingly exploitative, insensitive and oppressive state. When workers went on strike demanding higher wages and improved working conditions, that was viewed as a stumbling block to capitalist expansion and so the full wrath of the repressive state apparatus would be unleashed on them. The colonial state was there to protect the interests of the ruling minority capitalists by any means necessary, including by brutal violence. Laws were actually made to protect those who had both capital and power.

Because it was aimed at furthering the interests of capital, the European bourgeoisie state was exclusive. It was a club of the elite that decided public policy without any consultation. Democratic values were suppressed, at best, ignored. Its prime concern was with maximising profits and the general extraction of surplus to satisfy the interests of the metropolitan state and dominant classes. To do that, it relied on extreme brutality and used its military power to unleash violence on African communities without hesitation. As Mentan (2010:176) notes, the political and economic structures of the colonial state were conditioned to meet the repressive as well as the exploitative needs of the imperial states, leaving the former African territories unable to develop after the fall of the colonial empires.

The colonial state was an external creation and external determination by capitalist globalisation. It was not, therefore, an African creation, and so not an African state. This, no doubt, had enormous implications for the political economy of the post-colonial African state.

## ***6.4 Post-colonial African state***

### **6.4.1 Moment of triumph**

“Seek ye first the political kingdom and all else shall be added unto you,” the founding father of Ghana and the continent’s first independence leader, Kwame Nkrumah, is quoted as saying (Meredith 2005:141). Once independent, the continent was widely expected to make

unprecedented progress. Expectations were very high; the sense of excitement had been raised to ever greater heights by the sometimes exaggerated promises of nationalist leaders campaigning for power, promising to provide education, medical care, employment and land for all (Meredith 2010:141). The honeymoon of independence was indeed memorable. Riding the crown of popularity, African leaders, stepped forward with energy and gusto to tackle the tasks of development and nation-building. They devised ambitious plans to lift their people out of poverty and ignorance.

Given the range of difficulties that Africa faced at independence, the progresses made in the two decades after 1960 were incredible. The greatest strides were made in the development of human resources; in particular, in educating and training Africans. The World Bank (WB 1981:13) notes that student population increased from 36 to 63 percent of the age group at the primary level, from 3 to 13 percent at the secondary level, and from virtually zero to 1 percent at the university level during the first two decades of independence. The bank observed:

The African record is unique; nowhere else has a formal education system been created on so broad a scale in so short a time (WB 1981:13).

The health sector also registered notable successes. Infant mortality rates dropped from 38 to 25 per thousand, while life expectancy increased from 39 to 47 years (WB 1981:13). The number of medical and nursing personnel per capita doubled in spite of a massive increase in the population.

Roads, railways, ports and other important infrastructure were built at an unprecedented rate. Road-building received special attention, both for its economic effects and because of its ability to link and unify the disparate nations. The number of vehicles tripled in a space of two decades. Post-independence Africa was opened up with extraordinary speed. Millions of formerly isolated villagers now had access to cheaper transport, which created new options and opportunities for them. Independence also brought to Africa a cultural revival. African music, art and literature, freed from colonial disdain, expanded into new forms. African artists excelled and took to the world stage. The study of Africa - its history, archaeology, sociology, religion and politics - became a serious discipline at universities around the world as they set up departments of African studies.

Given the vast mineral resources that Africa was known to possess, the potential for economic development seemed unlimited. The World Bank economist, Andrew Kamarck, concluded in 1967:

For most of Africa, the economic future before the end of the century can be bright (Meredith 2005:142).

To the African leaders, agriculture was not able to provide the engine of economic growth. They thus envisaged a move from low-productivity agriculture to high-productivity manufacturing. Nkrumah remarked:

The circle of poverty can only be broken by a massively planned industrial undertaking (Meredith 2005:144).

The gods of the rain seemed to be celebrating with the continent and were very generous with the rains. Rainfall which is a key factor in determining Africa's fortunes was propitious. Throughout the 1950s, good rains boosted agricultural production. In 1961 Lake Chad and Lake Victoria reached their highest levels in the twentieth century (Meredith 2005:142).

The young nations were also assisted substantially by Western governments, who provided substantial amounts of aid. Meredith (2005:142) notes that the level of aid to sub-Saharan Africa in the form of grants or cheap loans from Western Europe and North America alone reached more than \$1 billion in 1964. Africa's significance was seen by how the rival powers jostled to court the newly independent states into their ideological corner during the Cold War. The continent was too valuable a prize to lose. While the former colonial powers sought to strengthen the special relationship they had formed with their former colonies, the Eastern bloc sought to gain influence in the new states. The Western world was suspicious and distrustful of any links between Africa and the Eastern bloc. Echoing Harold Macmillan's earlier view, United States President John F Kennedy in 1962 said:

We see Africa as probably the greatest open field of manoeuvre in the worldwide competition between the [communist] bloc and the non-communist (Meredith 2005:142).

For their ideological stance, most African governments chose what they called “African socialism” though it was not properly defined. They claimed that African societies traditionally included many indigenous aspects of socialism: the communal ownership of land; the egalitarian character of village life, collective decision-making and extensive networks of social obligation (Meredith 2005:145). President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, a leading advocate of African socialism remarked:

We in Africa have no more need of being converted to socialism than we have of being taught democracy. Both are rooted in our past, in the traditional society which produced us (Meredith 2005:145).

Africa's increasing international confidence and ambitions became evident in 1963 when over thirty countries established the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to provide Africa with a powerful independent voice in world affairs. The organisation was launched with high ideals and a mishmash of aims, which included the liberation of southern Africa from white minority rule.

#### **6.4.2 Constraints to economic development and nation/state building**

The difficulties that stood in the face of African states were enormous. Yet the resources available to governments to address these challenges and uplift Africans out of poverty were limited. Africa was the poorest and least developed region in the world. Only a few islands of modern economic development existed across the vast continent, most of them restricted to coastal or mining areas. Much of the inland remained severely undeveloped, remote and cut off from the modern world. Africa's huge physical size and dispersed population created transport needs and problems. The majority of Africans lived in rural areas. In 1945 there were only forty-nine towns on the entire continent. More than half were in North Africa: ten in Egypt, nine in Morocco, four in Algeria, one in Tunisia, and one in Libya; eleven others were in South Africa (Meredith 2005:152). Basic infrastructure - roads, railway, ports, and communication systems - was scant and did not penetrate the hinterland. Nearly a third of all Sub-Saharan countries are landlocked, relying on long links to the sea, hundreds, even thousands of kilometres by the shortest land route.

Much of the economies of the emerging African states had been developed in accordance with the needs of colonial powers. These economies were heavily dependent on foreign markets, as well as on external supplies of capital and technology. Their aim was therefore not for the development and upliftment of the indigenous communities but for the benefit of the imperial bourgeoisie. Furthermore, trade and industry were largely owned or controlled by foreign corporations. To all intents and purposes, the modern economy consisted largely of European-run mining enclaves and islands of settler agricultural activity. The economy of the natives was insignificant, producing very little for the market. In 1975 there were only eighty African-owned shops in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique (WB 1981:9). African-owned and operated enterprises with more than ten employees were extremely rare, even in the relatively advanced economies of Kenya, Uganda and Zimbabwe (WB 1981:9). Thus, at the beginning of the post-colonial period most Africans were outside the modern economy. Manufacturing, on which so many hopes for development were pinned, was only a small percentage of the GDP. Except for mining and trade, foreign investors found little to attract them to the continent: the risks were high while the markets were tiny (Meredith 2005:153).

A 1950s UN study noted that over seventy percent of the land under cultivation was devoted to subsistence crops, while less than ten percent was for export (WB 1981:12). African labour was, likewise, overwhelmingly concentrated on subsistence farming. Except for Southern Africa which had as much as ten percent of the population engaged in paid work, on the rest of the continent, there were probably no more than ten million African wage earners during any part of the year in 1960 (WB 1981:12). The dominance of subsistence farming presented obstacles to the development of agriculture. Farmers had to be induced to produce for the market, adopt new crops, and take new risks. Furthermore, established farming systems, which had evolved over centuries, had to be overhauled if production was to increase. New crops, more productive farming techniques, new methods of crop rotation and seed protection were generally unknown.

Added to this were the African climate and geography, which are often harsh and variable. Africa is pre-eminently tropical. The equator cuts across the continent, a fact which creates special obstacles to development. African soils are for the most part thin, deficient in organic nutrients, and in general only moderately fertile, thus producing limited yields (Meredith 2005:150-151; WB 1981:12). Rainfall is generally inadequate on a continent that heavily relies on agriculture. Well-watered areas are only about one quarter of the total; elsewhere,

rains are inadequate in volume and highly variable in time (WB 1981:12). Periodic droughts were a constant hazard, and could sometimes last for a number of years. Good soils were often in the hands of white settlers or big TNCs. The tropical climate is especially hospitable to bacterial and parasitic diseases and to endemic diseases such as malaria and bilharzia.

One of the most critical challenges of the immediate post-independence years was the dire shortage of skilled human power throughout the continent. There was a great reliance on expatriates throughout the continent. University trained human power was even more scarce. In most sub-Saharan African countries, over three quarters of skilled professionals were expatriates. Senior executive and technical jobs in government were also dominated by expatriates. Zaire was left without a single African doctor, lawyer, engineer, or army officer at independence (WB 1981:9). In the upper ranks of the civil service, only three Congolese out of 1 400 officials held posts, two of which were recent appointments (Meredith 2005:101). Even in Nigeria, a country with one of the most advanced education systems, Africans held fewer than 700 of the 3 000 senior posts in the civil service until the mid-1950s, while in Senegal, 1 500 French technical experts occupied almost all of the top jobs in 1961 (WB 1981:9). Where there were large numbers of white settlers, for example, Kenya and Tanzania, even fewer Africans were skilled. In these two cases, fewer than twenty percent of high-level civil service posts were occupied by African in the early 1960s (WB 1981:9). The scarcity of skilled labour force at the time of independence had adverse effects on public administration and industrial development.

Underdeveloped human resources can be partially explained by the fact that advanced education was still largely unavailable to most Africans: local facilities did not exist or, where they did, African enrolment was often restricted. In the late 1950s, less than 10 000 African students were attending universities at home or abroad (one student per 20 000 people). In fact, very few countries had more than 200 African students in university. As was the case at higher education level, the number of high school graduates was also limited. By 1960, the total of university graduates in Zaire was thirty (Meredith 2005:101). In the late 1950s, the entire sub-Saharan African region produced only 8 000 secondary school graduates per year (WB 1981:10). In fact, only three percent of high school age students were being educated at secondary school level in Africa in 1960, while only about one-third of the student-age population at primary level went to school. At the end of the 1959-1960 academic year in Congo, only 136 children completed secondary education (Meredith



2005:101). Only sixteen per cent of the adult population in Africa was literate (Meredith 2005:151). Thus, most Africans were predominantly illiterate and innumerate at independence.

Just as educational and training needs were not being met, so too were health needs neglected. In 1960, for example, there was just one physician for every 50 000 people in Sub-Saharan Africa as compared to one per 12 000 in other low-income countries (WB 1981:10). Life expectancy was lower than the average for all low-income countries (39 years compared with 42), and child death rates were substantially higher (39 per thousand compared with 23) (WB 1981:10). Attempts to control prevalent tropical diseases in many parts of the region by colonial governments were largely restricted to major urban centres leaving out the majority of rural people. The devastating effects of disease and sickness lowered the productivity of the workers and the ability to be innovative.

Meanwhile, Africa's population was growing rapidly, adding new challenges and stretching government services to the limit. On average, each woman in Africa contributed six children to the next generation. Between 1950 and 1980, Africa's population tripled, with nearly two-thirds of the increase occurring in rural areas, aggravating land shortages (Meredith 2005:152). Driven by landlessness and poverty, and attracted by prospects of a better life, millions migrated to urban areas, especially capital cities. The result was that the urban population in Africa expanded much faster than on any other continent. In thirty five African capitals, the population increased at an annual rate of 8.5 percent (Meredith 2005:152). This means that the population doubled every ten years. Most urbanites lived in slums and squatter settlements which lacked basic amenities like tap water, sanitation and electricity. For the majority, there were no prospects of employment.

### **6.4.3 The state in crisis**

After the euphoria of the independence era had died down, so many hopes and ambitions began to fade. Africa was in trouble. Not long into independence, the continent came to be spoken of only in negative terms. Scores of states were torn apart by war. Coups became the order of the day. One country after another fell into dictatorship. Even the founding fathers who once enjoyed massive popularity, turned against their own citizens. The majority of Africans enjoyed neither political rights nor freedoms. Dissent could no longer be tolerated in

many parts of sub-Saharan Africa. The boundaries between the party and state became blurred in most parts of post-colonial Africa. Some states had lost control of sizeable parts of their territories, even entire provinces, to terrorist groups, guerrillas and dissidents. Economic growth ground to a halt as the ruling elites raided state coffers at will. The politics of patronage took root. For the dictators in power, it was their time to eat. Many states could no longer afford to pay civil servants. The education and health systems in most countries literally collapsed. Factories closed. Unemployment skyrocketed and the youth left their countries in their millions for greener pastures in neighbouring countries. The ambitious ones and those closer to Europe, risked their lives using unconventional means to reach Europe. Hundreds of thousands drowned in the Mediterranean as they sought to enter the Promised Land of Europe. Millions at home were living in conditions of extreme poverty. In many cases, the state remained an empty title, never having got its feet on the ground, it simply failed to function (Meredith 2005:331). The future could be spoken of only in pessimistic terms. We highlight some of the key features of the political economy of post-colonial Africa.

#### **6.4.3.1 Economic growth and development**

After an initial period of growth, however, African economies faltered, then went into decline (WB 1989:1; WB 1981:2; UNCTAD 2001:3). The World Bank noted in 1989 (WB 1989:1) that the earlier progress made was now being eroded and that overall Africans were almost as poor as they were thirty years earlier. The inflation and recession of the mid-1970s' world economic crisis hit the region with greater impact than any other region. Economic performance deteriorated rapidly in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Slow overall economic growth, sluggish agricultural performance coupled with rapid rates of population increase, and balance-of-payments and fiscal crises were dramatic indicators of economic trouble in that period (WB 1989:2). Between 1960 and 1979, per capita income in nineteen countries grew by less than one percent per year, while fifteen countries recorded a negative rate of growth of income per capita (WB 1989:2). In the 1989 report, the World Bank (WB 1989:2) noted that by 1987 sub-Saharan Africa, a region of 450 million people had a total GDP of around \$135 billion, more or less the same as that of Belgium, which had only ten million inhabitants.

Output per person rose more slowly in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other part of the world particularly in the 1960s, and even slower in the 1970s (WB 1989:3). Of the thirty countries

classified by the UNCTAD as the poorest in the world, twenty were African and of the 36 countries listed in the World Bank's *World Development Report* in 1981 as "low income" (a per capita income of less than \$370), almost two thirds were African (WB 1989:3). A twenty percent increase in production registered during the 1960s was wiped out by a decline of similar proportions in the 1970s. Unlike many countries in other developing regions which managed to restore growth after the 1980s, stagnation and decline continued in the region during the first half of the 1990s. Food production per person was stagnant in the first decade and actually declined in the next due to a sharp increase in population. Imports of food grains (wheat, rice, and maize) rose by nine percent per year since the early 1960s. This reinforced food dependency and food aid also increased substantially. Since about eighty percent of the population earned its income from agriculture, the drop in production in that sector meant a real income loss for many of the poor.

The initial spurt of industrialisation soon petered out. While manufacturing output in the 1960s grew by eight percent a year, it grew by only five percent in the 1970s (Meredith 2005:279). By the 1980s, much of Africa was facing "de-industrialisation" as foreign investors shunned the continent and looked to more promising markets in Asia and Latin America. Moreover, Africa's exports are heavily concentrated on primary products, in sharp contrast to the exports of East Asia, which consist predominantly of manufacturing. Poor yields due to periodic droughts and labour intensive farming methods meant that farming became an increasingly unattractive business. Faced with low producer prices, inadequate marketing systems, poor extension services, lack of investment in rural areas, and shortages of credit facilities, farmers deserted in droves, some heading for urban areas while others resorted to subsistence agriculture (Meredith 2005:280).

The situation was worsened by the debt crisis that kept on battering the continent. During the decade between 1970 and 1980, sub-Saharan Africa's external debt rose from \$6 billion to \$38 billion; by 1982 it had reached \$66 billion and a year later it was standing at \$86 billion (Meredith 2005:282). Many countries had debts amounting to forty percent or higher of their annual national income. In 1982 arrears reached almost \$10 billion. The impact on ordinary citizens was devastating. So sharp was the continent's economic decline during the 1980s that it became known as "the lost decade." By the mid-1980s, most sub-Saharan Africans were poorer than they had been at the time of independence (Meredith 2005:368). In country after another, the standards of living nosedived. Crippled by debt, mismanagement and corruption,

the African state could no longer afford to provide basic services to the citizens. Basic infrastructure deteriorated. Inflation was galloping. The drastic erosion of civil service salaries wrecked what was left of the humanity of civil servants. Brain drain left the states in desperate need of skilled workers. Between 1960 and 1987, it is estimated that over 100 000 skilled professionals left the continent to work abroad (Meredith 2005:368). As the crisis deepened, the middle class was impoverished and pushed into the informal parallel market, smuggling, semi-legal and other illegal activities just to make ends meet. In Zaire, the parallel economy was estimated to be a lot bigger than the official economy (Meredith 2005:369). The majority of the country's minerals were smuggled out of the country by the elites in business and politics and by armed dissidents who controlled huge areas of the country.

By the 1990s, the continent was in a sorry state. Compared to other parts of the world, Africa was dropping further and further. Hospitals and clinics ran short of medicines and equipment; schools lacked textbooks; factories closed because of lack of raw materials or spare parts for machinery; shops were plagued by shortages; electricity supplies were erratic; communication systems broke down; unemployment soared; living standards plummeted (Meredith 2005:283). Ghana graphically represented the collapse of the African states. From a strong agricultural economy with substantial cash reserves, a well-skilled human resource base and a competitive parliamentary system at independence, the country reached near bankruptcy and was devastated by five military coups (Wunsch and Olowu 1990:1). Public services collapsed as skilled personnel left the country in thousands. Only thirty percent of the bus fleet were on the road while twenty percent of locomotives were on the railways (Meredith 2005:283). Ghana became a wasteland, crumbling in ruins. Cote d'Ivoire had also registered impressive growth figures of more than seven percent per annum in the immediate post-independence period. It was being referred to as "a miracle;" but the miracle spectacularly disintegrated and became a nightmare.

With tax revenues meagre because of a dwindling tax base, shunned by banks abroad and facing bankruptcy, and with nowhere else to turn to, African governments, beginning with Senegal in 1979, surrendered their economies to the Bretton Woods institutions by adopting the suicidal structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) that prescribed liberalisation, deregulation, and privatisation of economic activity in search for a solution to economic decline. In all, thirty-six governments in the sub-region entered into some agreements with the World Bank and the IMF in the 1980s. The aim, argues Meredith (2005:370), was to get

governments to shift from consumption, so favoured by the elites, to investment. The result of the structural adjustment programmes was an absolute disaster for the continent. Barely any African country exited from such programmes with success, establishing conditions for rapid, sustained economic growth (WB 1981:5).

After a decade of structural adjustment, per capita income in the region was lower than it had been in 1960 while growth per capita in the 1980s contracted by an annual rate of 2.2 percent. Foreign aid doubled during the 1980s, from \$7.6 billion a year to \$15 billion precipitating donor fatigue. At the end of the 1980s, the World Bank admitted that economic reform alone, without an accompanying political reform was not going to produce the desired result. Henceforth, the West emphasised, not just economic conditions, but also political ones.

#### **6.4.3.2 Political fragility**

Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:5) argues that one of the fundamental questions the broader African national project was preoccupied with was how to forge national consciousness out of a multiplicity of ethnic groups enclosed within the colonial state boundaries. Indeed welding a variety of different peoples, speaking different languages and at different stages of political and social development into nations, was always going to be difficult for African leaders. By throwing diverse peoples together without considering their histories, ethnic conflicts were inevitable and these continue to destabilise the continent. Hostility between different ethnic groups has become a particular problem both within and between states in Africa. Furthermore, once they had established themselves, various European administrations deliberately played off ethnic groups against one another (Danziger 1991:142). Many post-colonial African countries have witnessed a litany of conflicts which pitted tribe against tribe, people against people.

The newly independent African states were not “nations,” lacking any ethnic, class or ideological cement to hold them together. They had no strong shared historical and social identities upon which to build (Meredith 2005:154). Félix Houphouët-Boigny of Cote d’Ivoire was aware of it:

We have all inherited from our former masters not nations but states, states that have within them extremely fragile links between ethnic groups (Meredith 2005:154).

The anti-colonial cause had provided a unity of purpose and for some time, the emerging leaders had exploited a variety of grievances among the populations to galvanise support for the cause. They had subdued and silenced alternative narratives that would be detrimental to the project at hand. But once the euphoria of independence began to subside, so did those suppressed loyalties, imaginings and ambitions came thrusting to the surface. For some it was quite clear from the beginning that nothing else, apart from the drive for independence, could unite them.

Yet at that time, it was a widely-held belief that once the new states started to focus their energies towards nation-building and economic development, ethnic loyalties would disappear.

I am confident that when we have our own citizenship, our own national flag, our own national anthem, we shall find the flame of national unity will burn bright and strong (Meredith 2005:157).

So declared Abubakar Tafawa Balewa, Nigeria's first Prime Minister, during a debate over the motion for independence. Ahmed Sékou Touré of Guinea shared the same optimistic sentiment:

In three or four years, no one will remember the tribal, ethnic or religious rivalries which, in the recent past, caused so much damage to our country and its population (Meredith 2005:157).

Yet, as history was to show, the optimism was divorced from reality. It was just a matter of time before the demon of ethnicity started to rare its ugly head, inflicting one country after another with devastating consequences.

Nigeria with over 250 ethno-linguistic groups was particularly complex. No national party emerged before and immediately after independence. The country was plagued by intense and complex contestations for power between its three regions, each of which was dominated by a major ethnic group with its own political party (Meredith 2005:75). There was also a huge development gap between the north and the two southern regions. The geographically large North was largely Muslim and Hausa-speaking who looked disdainfully on the people of the South. Balewa did not mince his words when writing about the

artificiality of the Nigerian national project in 1948:

Since 1914 the British government has been trying to make Nigeria into one country, but the Nigerian people themselves are historically different in their backgrounds, in their religious beliefs and customs and do not show themselves any signs of willingness to unite . . . Nigerian unity is only a British invention (Meredith 2005:8).

In similar vein, Yoruba leader, Obafemi Awolowo, had written a year earlier:

Nigeria is not a nation. It is a mere geographical expression. There are no "Nigerians" in the same sense as there are "English", "Welsh", or "French". The word "Nigerian" is merely a distinctive appellation to distinguish those who live within the boundaries of Nigeria and those who do not (Meredith 2005:8).

A Northern leader visited Lagos (in the west) for the first time in 1949 and wrote:

The whole place was alien to our ideas and we found the members of the other regions might well belong to another world as far as we were concerned (Meredith 2005:75).

Northern Muslims regarded Southerners as “pagans” and “infidels” and were forbidden to associate with Southerners on both religious and administrative grounds. Minority groups in each region resented the dominance of the three major ethnic groups and the discrimination they suffered as minorities and harbored ambitions to obtain their own separate states within Nigeria and the resources that would go with them. Control of the federal government determined the allocation of resources. Politicians on all sides whipped up ethnic fear, suspicion and jealousy for their own advantage and to entrench themselves in power. As Meredith (2005:194) points out, tribalism became the ideology of politics. Just five years into independence, the military struck, arresting the federal Prime Minister Balewa, executing him by the side of the road and dumping his bullet-ridden body in a ditch. The end result would be army rule and a slide into civil war. The coups and counter-coups had tribal and ethnic overtones. A million people are estimated to have died during the civil war and periods of political confusion.

The inhabitants of the six thousand chiefdoms that were dismantled by colonialists to form Zaire were not easily going to blend and form a nation and a state. At independence in 1960, a fragile and shaky coalition government of twelve political parties, which included bitter rivals, was formed under President Patrice Lumumba. Within a fortnight of independence, Congo was in a critical situation. Internal security had collapsed, the army had degenerated into a mob; the exodus of whites had left the administration bereft of expertise; Leopoldville was in turmoil; the secession of Katanga threatened to break the country apart and Belgium was actively looking for ways of ousting Lumumba who harboured deep resentment for them (Meredith 2005:101). Four months into independence, Congo was divided into four regimes, each with its own army and foreign sponsors (Meredith 2005:110). A short while later with the help of the CIA, Joseph Mobutu seized power. Lumumba was arrested and executed. Zaire descended into civil war and a socio-political quagmire out of which it never recovered. Mobutu himself, after decades of a brutal dictatorship and raiding of the state coffers willy-nilly, was overthrown in a coup and his successor, Laurent Desirée Kabila, was also murdered in a coup only three years into power. From independence, Zaire resembled a combat zone for warring factions, prowling soldiers, foreign troops and bands of mercenaries. Equatorial Guinea enjoyed only 145 days of independence before it was pitched into a nightmare of brutality and coercion that lasted for eleven years.

From 1963 onwards, coups became a defining feature of African politics, striking not only regimes that were inherently weak and unstable but bringing down even the giants of Africa – Ghana, Nigeria, and even Ethiopia's Haile Selassie. Sylvanus Epiphany Olympio of Togo was the very first presidential victim of a military coup when he was toppled and murdered in 1963. In Dahomey (Benin), Colonel Christophe Soglo set himself up in power. Ten days later, Colonel Jean-Bédel Bokassa seized power in the Central African Republic. Three days later, on 2 January 1966, Colonel Sangoule Lamizana removed Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) President, Maurice Yameogo. The sequence of coups did not stop there but spread across the continent. Eleven years after conquering the mighty British Empire, Nkrumah was overthrown by his generals in February 1966. In January 1971, Idi Amin staged a coup in Uganda. In Ethiopia, Haile Selassie was overthrown by the army in 1974. In the first two decades of independence, there were forty successful coups and innumerable attempted coups throughout the continent, many of which were accomplished without violence. In Benin, there were six coups after independence and all were bloodless. Coup leaders always stressed



the temporary nature of military rule. All they required, they said, was sufficient time to clear up the morass of corruption, mismanagement, tribalism, nepotism and other assorted malpractices they claimed had prompted them to intervene and restore honest and efficient government and national integrity (Meredith 2005:218-219). But generally the military rulers turned out to be no more proficient, no more immune to corruption, and no more willing to give up power than the regimes they had overthrown.

Sudan was a country of two halves which were different in every aspect: the north was hot, dry, partly desert, inhabited largely by Arabic-speaking Muslims and relatively advanced; the south was green, fertile, with a high rainfall, remote and undeveloped, populated by diverse black tribes, speaking a multitude of languages, adhering mostly to traditional religions and a small Christian minority (Meredith 2005:35). The historical links between the north and the south were a source of friction. In the past century, northern traders had raided the south in search of slaves and ivory. The bitterness and hatred that the south had towards the northerners still endured. Northerners treated southerners scornfully, referring to them as slaves. The British added to this hostility by favouring the northerners over the southerners.

The fault lines dividing north from south became apparent at independence. The departing British were replaced largely by the northerners, enhancing southern fears about northern supremacy. Of the 800 senior civil service posts, only six were awarded to southerners (Meredith 2005:344-345). Furthermore, there was a heavy presence of northern professionals and traders in the south and were often rough in their dealings with the local populace. This soon rekindled old resentments. The northern elites also promoted Islam as the national language and changed the day of rest from Sunday to Friday. Needless to say, all this raised intense resentment so that as early as 1955, the army had mutinied and a civil war begun. In fact Sudan has an unenviable record of having the longest civil war in modern history, though with a few breaks in between. The war finally led to the division of the vast country into Sudan and South Sudan in 2011.

Just as the British treated Sudan as a country of two halves, so did the French in neighbouring Chad. In reverse sequence, the southerners in Chad gained control at independence in 1960 triggering revolt by northerners. President Francois Tombalbaye, a southerner, dealt particularly harshly with the northern Muslims. The Northerners revolted in 1965 and the

country descended into a protracted civil war. Some ten years later, President Tombalbaye was ousted in a coup. In the early 1980s, already one of the poorest counties on the continent, Chad had fragmented into a melee of rival factions, with hordes of armed bands who roamed the country holding villagers at ransom (Meredith 2005:355). There was country, a population, but no state power; all semblance of central authority had collapsed.

The most chilling example of the potentially explosive nature of ethnic rivalry occurred in Rwanda in 1994. The kingdom was occupied by a Hutu majority and a Tutsi minority who spoke the same language, shared the same customs and lived together on the same hillsides. Although ethnic divisions were well entrenched, what mattered most was status. The Tutsi rulers had for long been favoured by both the German and Belgium colonisers, as well as by the influential Catholic Church even if they were in the minority. By the 1930s, notes Meredith (2005:159), the colonialists had made ethnicity the defining feature of daily life so much so that whatever sense of collective identity that had previously existed in Rwanda withered and died. By the end of the 1950s, ethnic agitation of the Hutus had taken root. Violence broke out in 1959 - even before independence - in which roving bands of Hutu went on a rampage, attacking the Tutsi, destroying and looting their property and burning their homes. When Rwanda became independent, the Hutu hegemony was fully entrenched. The "Hutu Revolution" that happened just after independence led to the mass exodus of hundreds of thousands of Tutsi to neighbouring countries. The Tutsi were viewed as enemies seeking to impose their rule on Rwanda again. The dominant narrative became one that the Tutsi were invaders who had overrun Rwanda in the pre-colonial era and enslaved the Hutu. Hutu politicians continued to use the language of hate and division against the Tutsi to justify their persecution and for their propaganda purposes. The massacre of the Tutsi had started.

The Tutsi "Final Question" was solved in 1994 in a slaughter of a scale not witnessed since the Nazi extermination programme against the Jews. The human, social and economic costs of the genocide were staggering. In 100 days, 800 000 people had been slaughtered, about 75 percent of the Tutsi population; more people had been killed more quickly than in any other mass killing in recorded history (Meredith 2005:523). Over three million Tutsi sought refuge in neighbouring countries. In a report published ten years after the genocide, the World Bank (2004) suggested that GDP per capita remained much lower than what it would have been without the genocide. The Bank added that per capita GDP in 2004 would probably be

between 25 and 30 percent higher if the conflict had not taken place and about a quarter of the population in poverty could be said to be poor as a result of the genocide (WB 2004:1).

The history of post-colonial Africa can actually be called a history of conflict. In 2000, one in five people in sub-Saharan Africa lived in a country affected by conflict and the four decades between 1960 and 2000, more than a third of the region's countries experienced civil strife (WB 2004:1). The cost of these conflicts in terms of loss of life, human and social capital has been astounding, and the psychological impact of the violence has been enormous.

#### **6.4.3.3 Politics of the belly and politics of patronage**

Post-colonial Africa has produced leaders who know what it means to enrich oneself. Before independence, opportunities for self-enrichment were very limited. Only the white elite, officials and businessmen benefitted from the system. They enjoyed a privileged lifestyle which the black elite aspired to emulate but were largely prevented from attaining. Independence opened the floodgates. Political power soon translated into economic power. The political arena became a site of contestation for scarce and limited resources. Capture of state power translated to immediate riches. The state became a site of accumulation of resources by the politicians and those who were close to them – families, girlfriends, business associates and members of the same clan or ethnic group. They packed the civil service and parastatals with members of their own tribes.

As soon as they came to power, politicians wasted no time in accumulating wealth and privileges for themselves at a scale unparalleled in modern history. Civil servants who filled in positions left by the departing colonial officials insisted on the same high salaries and perks. In 1962, a Gabonese Member of Parliament was paid more than her British counterpart and earned in six months as much as the average person did in 36 years, while in Nigeria, Ministers were rewarded not only with princely salaries but rent-free, air-conditioned residences, replete with stewards, gardeners and drivers, generous car allowances, entertainment budgets, free telephone and free electricity (Meredith 2005:170-171). Political activity was seen by aspiring African leaders as the most direct way of securing wealth and social standing. Through it they accessed pensions, housing and transport allowances and cheap loans. Proximity to political power also entailed easy access to lucrative government contracts and decisions over who gets them.

In numerous cases, politicians looted the state treasury, transferring money to their private accounts both at home and in Western capitals. In other cases, they had access to cheap loans from the state and state-owned banks, which loans were often never repaid. Ghost workers were very common and their salaries went to politicians or high ranking civil servants whom they worked in cohorts with. Ministers sold to themselves shares in state-owned companies. Bribery and embezzlement spread from top to bottom, from politicians to tax collectors, customs officers, policemen, postal clerks and dispensary assistants and it affected everything from job applications to licenses, food aid, bursaries, foreign exchange and the location of factories (Meredith 2005:173). In time, bribery and corruption became a way of life, accepted as a means of getting by, earning a living, obtaining a service or avoiding a hassle.

The riches they acquired for themselves were flamboyantly displayed in plush villas, elegant apartment buildings and town houses, luxury cars and lavish lifestyles. Countless African leaders had several wives, girlfriends and concubines all over the place. Acquiring properties in western capitals became very fashionable and attractive. Some of the money was put in off-shore accounts. The renowned Swiss Banks became a favourite of many an African politician. For many politicians Europe became their shopping destination. A study of trade figures of 14 Francophone countries in 1964 showed that the amount spent on importing alcoholic drinks was six times higher than that spent on importing fertilizer and that half as much was spent on perfume and cosmetic imports as on machine tools (Meredith 2005:171).

After consolidating his hold on power, Joseph Mobutu next turned to self-enrichment on a scale unsurpassed anywhere else in Africa. He seized free of charge thousands of foreign-owned businesses, took possession of some, and gave others to his family members and cronies in exchange for patronage. At a stroke he acquired a vast agricultural empire, which became the third largest employer in Zaire (Meredith 2005:297). Seventy five percent of the ranch cattle were in his possession. He used the central bank at will as his private account and for his family and cronies. Huge sums of money were funnelled into his private bank accounts overseas. It was estimated that by the end of the 70s, he had become one of the richest people on earth with his fortune estimated at \$5 billion (Meredith 2005:299). With this fortune, he assembled a selection of luxury villas and other properties mostly in European cities, but also in Brazil and other independent African cities. He also built lavish

residences in Zaire where he used to entertain foreign dignitaries. At his ancestral home, he built a massive complex at an estimated cost of \$100 million. Etienne Tshisekedi, one of his former ministers described him as a “Zairian Caligula”:

Mobutu truly has a malady. He is a kleptomaniac. Zaire is ruled by an uncontrolled thief. It is a kleptocracy (Meredith 2005:307).

As the economy was disintegrating due to Mobutu’s ruinous economic policies, corruption spread from the top to every level of Zairean society. Mobutu himself relied on corruption to hold the collapsing system together and keep himself in office. He is reported as saying,

If you steal do not steal too much at a time. You may be arrested. Steal cleverly, little by little (Meredith 2005:303).

Civil servants went unpaid for months. High ranking civil servants and army officers habitually siphoned off government resources. Reports indicated that that as many as two-thirds of Zaire’s civil servants on the state payroll were in fact fictitious, with their wages simply pocketed by senior officials (Meredith 2005:301). Senior army officers often kept for themselves their soldiers’ salary and sold army food supplies on the thriving parallel market. The soldiers were notorious for extorting money from civilians and confiscating farmers’ produce. Air force officers turned the air force into their own air transport company. Nothing could be acquired without a bribe. The situation forced Catholic Archbishop Eugène Kabanga of Lubumbashi to issue a strongly worded pastoral letter in 1976 against the system:

How many children and adults die without medical care because they are unable to bribe the medical personnel who are supposed to care for them? Why are there no medical supplies in the hospitals while they are found in the marketplace? How did they get there? Why is it that in our courts justice can only be obtained by fat bribes to the judge? Why are prisoners forgotten in jail? They have no one to pay off the judge who sits on the dossier (Meredith 2005:302).

In a speech delivered in 1983, Houphouët-Boigny who had interests in farming, boasted about how he had accumulated millions and admitting that he had bank accounts in Switzerland.

One of the banks manages my profits from pineapple production. I have 4 billion in turn-over from pineapples... I had two sharp falls two years ago when I reached 3 000 tonnes of pineapples a month, producing a third of the national total. I have stopped producing coffee. At one time it brought in very little, perhaps 100 million Francs, but that 100 million is today worth billions. I put all this money in my bank accounts in Switzerland, and that produced a lot of interest. My deposits account for a quarter of deposits in one of the banks in Abidjan. ... There is even a bank which manages my profits in avocados, of which, I think, I am the main producer in Cote d'Ivoire. There is another bank which modestly manages my profits from poultry farming (Meredith 2005:288).

Houphouët-Boigny's favourite scheme was to transform his home village of Yamoussoukro into the country's new capital city, complete with ostentatious buildings. He built there a presidential palace that was sometimes referred to as an "African version of Versailles." His ambition also made him to build himself a basilica modelled on St Peters in Rome, but exceeding the height of St. Peters by 37 feet. The basilica was built at a cost of nearly \$200 million, in a poor country where the standards of living were on a free fall, something that discomfited the Vatican. Built with almost no African materials, save local sand to be mixed with French cement, it had a capacity of 18 000 worshipers (Hiltzik 1989). Houphouët-Boigny was reported to keep at least one tenth of the country's revenue from cocoa export revenues in his personal bank account for distribution to his huge patronage, and his cronies and supporters were reportedly benefiting from the tax and tariff exemptions, high level state jobs and subsidised credit for their businesses (Meredith 2005:288).

Jean-Bédél Bokassa of Central African Republic combined not only extreme greed but delusions of opulence unsurpassed by any other African leader. His sexual tastes were insatiable. He is reported to have had 17 wives, dozens of mistresses and 55 official children (Meredith 2005:224). Bokassa married a beautiful woman in each foreign country that he visited. He boasted in an interview:

In Formosa, for example, I hustled the most beautiful woman in the country whom I later married. In Bucharest, the most beautiful woman in Romania; in Libreville, the

most beautiful woman in Gabon... and so on. My criterion was beauty (Meredith 2005:227).

He raided government coffers at will. From the proceeds he made from diamond and ivory deals, Bokassa bought valuable properties in Europe, including four chateaux in France, a 50-room mansion in Paris, houses in Nice and Toulouse and a villa in Berne (Meredith 2005:226). To please his ancestors, he built a massive ancestral home and ordered a highway to be built to it. He packed his presidential guard with people from his own village. He allowed his ministers to make their own wealth and occasionally reprimanding them for extreme self-indulgence but unwilling to tackle corruption.

Declaring the Central African Republic an empire and himself as emperor, he was crowned at an extravagant ceremony, which resembled Napoleon's coronation as emperor of France. He imported all the finer things fit for the occasion from France: a crown of diamonds, an imperial throne, thoroughbred horses, coronation robes, brass helmets and breast plates for the imperial guard, tonnes of wine and flowers, and sixty Mercedes Benz cars for the guests (Meredith 2005:228). In spite of such conspicuous feasting, there was just about 300km of tared road in the whole country.

The first years of independence in Nigeria became a festivity of power being turned into profit. The advantages of political offices were used at every opportunity to create huge empires of wealth and patronage. Using government money, party and government elites were able to reward their supporters and patronage networks with jobs, contracts, loans, scholarships and any favour that they could. In Nigeria, government business was regarded as no man's business and likewise government money was "orphaned money". It was perfectly normal to steal state funds especially if they were used to benefit not only the individual but also members of one's community. Those with the opportunity to be in government as politicians or civil servants were expected to use their influence to advance private and communal interests. Independence did not do away with that attitude. The government continued to be seen as a reservoir of free money that could be used for personal and community purposes without any sense of shame or guilt. Plunderers of the government treasury were often excused on the grounds that they had only "taken their share" (Meredith 2005:174-175). Eventually every aspect of Nigerian society was permeated by corruption. A senior civil servant is reported as saying:

You bribe to get your child into school; you pay to secure your job and continue to pay in some cases to retain it. You pay a hospital doctor or nurse to get proper attention; you pay the policeman to evade arrest. This catalogue of shame can continue without end (Meredith 2005:175).

General Ibrahim Babangida who seized power in a coup in 1985 together with his military clique and cronies, looted oil revenues, profiteered from drug smuggling and engaged in organised commercial fraud on an unparalleled scale. He was considered the most corrupt ruler in the history of Nigeria (Meredith 2005:382).

In Ghana, Nkrumah's ministers were notorious for giving lucrative contracts to foreign corporations for a ten percent kickback. Krobo Edusei gained notoriety after his wife bought a £3 000 gold plated bed from England (Meredith 2005:173). He confessed to owning fourteen houses, a luxurious beach house, a long lease on a London flat, several expensive cars and six different bank accounts (Meredith 2005:173). Even Nkrumah himself was also allegedly involved in the business of taking bribes from foreign businessmen and others seeking government contracts, becoming a very rich man in the process.

Hastings Kamuzu Banda of Malawi established a huge business empire which extended into farming, transport, property, oil distribution, pharmaceuticals and finance. His empire, at its peak, made up a third of Malawi's GDP and employed ten percent of the wage-earning workforce. Omar Bongo of Gabon presided over the country's oil riches for over two decades and made himself one of the richest men on earth. Francisco Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea hoarded all foreign exchange along with large amounts of local currency at his various mansions. Relocating to his native home in his advanced age, he took with him most of the national treasury, storing huge wards of bank notes in bags and suitcases, some of which rotted in the ground. In Kenya, Jomo Kenyatta's young wife, Ngina and his daughter Margaret, operated huge business empires and used their link with Kenyatta for personal gain. Ngina was believed to be one of the richest people in Kenya with business interests that stretched from plantations, ranches, property, hotels and ivory trade. High-level corruption was estimated to have cost the country half of its elephant population during Kenyatta's reign.



A reliable milking cow for the political elites in post-colonial Africa has been the state-owned enterprises (SOEs). These covered virtually all aspects of the national economy. Most of them were poorly managed, overstaffed, subjected to frequent political interference and requiring huge government subsidies to keep going (Meredith 2005:277-278). The personnel were in many cases unqualified, tended to be idle, arrogant and corrupt. Fraud and inefficiency abounded within the sector. SOEs became the centre of a grid of corruption. Ministers preyed on parastatals under their ministries for foreign trips and for providing jobs for their patronage networks. Contracts were often awarded to dubious “briefcase” companies that never had a record of delivering goods and services, and for the most part belonged to their family members, friends and kinsmen. Project costs were grossly inflated to cater for kickbacks. Many projects were rendered uneconomical. Company assets were regularly stolen. Payrolls were full of ghost workers. State-owned banks were a chief target. They were forced to lend huge loans to politicians and their associates without any prospect that they would ever be repaid.

Mali established 23 SOEs after independence, which included garages, repair shops, metal works, a printing plant, pharmacies and bookshops (Meredith 2005:278). All of them descended into confusion and chaos, with a bloated labour force and accumulating huge debts. In Cote d’Ivoire, the number of parastatals rose from five in 1960 to 84 in 1979. These were run as private fiefdoms for the ruling elite. Senegal had more than a hundred, which were estimated to employ four times the labour force needed. A report on Uganda’s state-owned bank was damning:

.... to every regime, the Uganda Commercial Bank was a gravy train. New ministers, army officers, and parliamentarians would descend upon it and take out huge loans, often with inadequate or non-existent collateral. These people saw the loans as rewards for bringing the government to power (Meredith 2005:278-279).

In Guinea, Touré set up a string of SOEs that were poorly managed, heavily in debt, rife with corruption and crippled by low production. Writing about Guinea’s SOEs, Claude Riviere (cited in Meredith 2005:278) explains some bizarre decisions that were made:

To set up a cannery without products to can, a textile factory that lacked cotton supplies, a cigarette factory without sufficient locally grown tobacco and to develop

... a forest region that had no roads and trucks to carry its output - all of these were gambles taken by utopian idealists and ignoramuses.

Opportunities for the politics of patronage available to African politicians provided them with the glue they needed to consolidate their hold on power. Civil servants in most countries regarded their positions primarily as a means of settling their obligations towards their own kith and kin, an attitude that, far from being condemned, was often shared and actively backed by the larger society and most certainly, by those who profited from it. They had thousands of appointments to make to cabinets, parliaments and government positions and parastatals. Furthermore, in most countries, the state was the largest employer, thus the chief distributor of contracts, jobs and benefits. Many appointments were made not on the basis of merit but of tribal affiliation or party loyalty. It was not a case of “what do you know?” but of “who do you know?” The awarding of tenders and the allocation of development projects were influenced by similar considerations. Patronage links radiated outwards from presidencies to provinces, districts villages and wards (Meredith 2005:169). At each level were “big men” who worked the system, providing followers and friends with jobs, tenders and favours in exchange for political support. To be a minister, high-ranking civil servant or ruling party official meant to have a lifetime’s chance to accumulate wealth. In Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda was said to control over 40 000 patronage positions (Meredith 2005:380). Decisions which in western democracies are left to (even) low ranking civil servants and technicians are in African countries made by ministers for the purposes of dispensing patronage. To retain support, they have to distribute rewards. The politics of patronage and patrimonial rule became a very pronounced common political pattern throughout sub-Saharan Africa. Meredith (Meredith 2005:169) suggests that a small elite - no more than three percent of the national population - used their position for personal gain.

#### **6.4.3.4 Personality cults**

Nkrumah, Leopold Senghor (Senegal), Houphouët-Boigny, Touré, Modibo Keita (Mali), Sylvanus Epiphonio Olympio (Togo), Kenyatta, Julius Nyerere (Tanzania), Kaunda and Banda all enjoyed great prestige and honour as nationalist leaders who had successfully challenged and conquered the impregnable imperial forces. They were seen to typify the states they led and quickly took advantage to consolidate their power. They established a system of personal rule and encouraged personality cults (Meredith 2005:163). They were

literally deified. Senghor spoke for them:

The President personifies the nation, as did the monarch of former times his peoples. The masses are not mistaken who speak of the reign of Modibo Keita, Sékou Touré, and Houphouët-Boigny, in whom they see, above all, the elected of God through the people (Meredith 2005:163).

The personality cult around Nkrumah flew above all others. He had the distinction of having been the first to successfully confront British rule in Africa and opened the floodgates for independence for the rest of the continent. Consequently, he was seen (and also saw himself) as a messiah destined to play an even greater role. Even before independence, party press built up the image of a man of mystical powers, a new Moses who would lead his people to the Promised Land of independence. The *Evening News* of 19 June 1954, for example, proclaimed:

Man of Destiny, Star of Africa, Hope of Millions of down-trodden blacks,  
Deliverer of Ghana, Iron Boy, Great Leader of Street Boys.

Ordinary people came to regard him as a messiah capable of performing miracles. His veneration in hymns and prayers took religious overtones. Party supporters recited phrases like, “I believe in Kwame Nkrumah” (Meredith 2005:23).

His dream was of a United States of Africa that would be a giant economically, politically and militarily, as united and powerful as the US or the Soviet Union. He dreamt of himself as leader of that powerhouse and believed that he could do for Africa what Marx and Lenin had done for Europe and Mao Tse-tung for China. He spent hours on end creating an official ideology which he called “Nkrumahism” and built the Kwame Nkrumah Ideological Institute which cost millions of dollars (Meredith 2005:162-163). The centre was staffed mostly by left-wing expatriates who worked meticulously, constructing elaborate political theories. Nkrumah was accustomed to a diet of endless praise. Day-in-day-out, the press eulogised his unparalleled intellectual brilliance, his courage, his foresight and his integrity. A 1961 official depiction declared:

To millions of people living both inside and outside the continent of Africa, Kwame Nkrumah is Africa and Africa is Kwame Nkrumah. When the question was asked: “What is going to happen in Africa? ’it is to one man that everyone will look for an answer: Kwame Nkrumah. To the imperialists and colonialists his name is a curse on their lips; to the settlers his name is a warning that the good old days at the expense of the African are coming to an end; to Africans suffering under foreign domination, his name is a breath of hope and means freedom, brotherhood and racial equality; to us his people, Kwame Nkrumah is our father, our teacher, our brother, our friend, indeed our very lives, for without him we would no doubt have existed, but we would not have lived; there would have been no hope of a cure for our sick souls, no taste of glorious victory after a life time of suffering. What we owe is greater even than the air we breathe, for he made us as surely as he made Ghana (Meredith 2005:179-180).

Like-wise the *Evening News* captured the mood of the moment:

When our history is recorded, the name Kwame Nkrumah will be written of as the liberator, the Messiah, the Christ of our day, whose great love for mankind wrought changes in Ghana, in Africa and in the world at large (Meredith 2005:179).

Nkrumah also assumed grand titles: Man of destiny, Star of Africa, His High Dedication and most famous of all, *Osagyefo*, a name which meant “victor in war”, but which was more often translated as “redeemer” (Meredith 2005:180). His presence became unavoidable: his image embellished coins, banknotes, postage stamps; his statue stood outside parliament; his name appeared in neon lights; his birthday became a public holiday; framed photographs adorned offices and shops (Meredith 2005:180). He passed legislation to criminalise anyone who disrespected the person and dignity of the Head of state. Even as he lay dying in a Bucharest hospital, he wrote his will which began: “I Kwame Nkrumah of Africa” and charged his executors to “cause my body to be embalmed and preserved” like Lenin and if this was not possible, then he requested that his body be cremated and the ashes be scattered all over the continent of Africa (Meredith 2005:262).

However, no other African leader of the independence era was revered so widely as Emperor Haile Selassie of Ethiopia. He won worldwide fame due to his defiance against the Italian

dictator Mussolini's brutal invasion in the 1930s. He stood as a symbol of an independent Africa that nationalist leaders living under colonial rule all aspired to achieve (Meredith 2005:206). Added to this was the mystique of the monarchy as descendent from King Solomon that was preserved over generations. He was referred to as "Elect of God". The Orthodox Church upheld his divine right to rule. Elaborate rituals and the religious ceremonies performed by patriarchs and priests surrounded his daily life. In Jamaica adherents of Rastafarianism worshipped him as a living god (Jah). When he visited the country in 1966, reports indicated that miracles happened. His image appeared on bank notes and coins and his picture had to be displayed in every home, office and most public places. The anniversaries of his birth, coronation and his return from exile were made national holidays. In the hall where he met dignitaries and officials every morning, they would line up and bow before him.

Mobutu's personality cult became all-pervasive. He gave himself grand titles, such as "Father of the nation", "Saviour of the people", "Supreme combatant" and "The Great strategist". His deeds were endlessly praised in song and dance in a way that took on religious overtones. Television news bulletins were preceded by the image of the dear leader Mobutu, with a leopard skin hat perched on his head, descending as it were, through the clouds from heaven (Meredith 2005:296). Places where he had worked and lived were designated as national pilgrimage points. His interior minister Engulu Baanga Mpongo once told the party supporters:

God has sent a great prophet, our prestigious Guide Mobutu. This prophet is our liberator, our Messiah. Our church is MPR. Its chief is Mobutu. We respect him like one respects a Pope. Our gospel is Mobutuism. This is why the crucifixes must be replaced by the image of our Messiah (Meredith 2005:297).

In Guinea, Touré edified himself in a similar way, enjoying to be called "The Great Son of Africa", "The Terror of International Imperialism, Colonialism and Neo-Colonialism", "The Doctor of the Revolutionary Sciences" (Meredith 2005:164). He depicted himself as an expert in every field of human endeavour, from agriculture to philosophy to football. He published more than twenty volumes of his speeches and political reflections on Guinea and African development and made them obligatory text books for students and learners, who were required to memorise them to pass their examinations. He was the source of all authority and no major

decision could be taken without his approval. He intervened at his own discretion in legal cases and deciding the verdict when he felt like in the name of the people. Writing of his style of rule, Lansiné Kaba noted that Guinea was

a one-man show in which Touré was the sole actor, while others danced, applauded or sang in his honour according to his whims (Meredith 2005:164).

Likewise in Malawi, Banda's stronghold extended not just over the government and the economy of the country but even over the moral standards under which the population was required to live (Meredith 2005:164). No other African leader imposed his personality with such vigour and force on his country as Banda. He demanded not just obedience but also obsequiousness. He insisted on directing even the minutest details of the country's affairs. He liked to tell his people:

Everything is my business. Everything. The state of education, the state of our economy, the state of our agriculture, the state of our transport, everything is my business (Meredith 2005:165).

Bokassa took pleasure in naming after himself a host of schools, hospitals, clinics, roads, development projects and Bangui's new university. The front page of every school exercise book in the whole country was decorated with his picture (Meredith 2005:225). He crowned himself emperor at an extravagant ceremony estimated to have cost over twenty million dollars. He promoted himself to the rank of Marshal, "for supreme service to the state". He held twelve ministries and interfered in all the others. In Uganda, Amin regularly needed to demonstrate his power and importance. He gave himself military medals and titles like "Conqueror of the British Empire" and he also claimed to be "the true heir of the throne of Scotland." In his drive to control organised religion, Francisco Macias Nguema of Equatorial Guinea ordered church sermons to include references to him as "The Only Miracle". Priests were forced to reiterate slogans such as "There is no God other than Marcias," and "God created Equatorial Guinea thanks to Papa Macias. Without Marcias, Equatorial Guinea would not exist."

Indeed the first generation of African leaders behaved like ancient kings and emperors. They portrayed themselves as indispensable. Instead of being grateful to their citizens for electing

them to office, the electorate was supposed to be grateful to have been afforded the opportunity to be led by them. Their presence was ubiquitous, their faces appeared on bank notes while their photographs graced offices, shops and even homes. They named major development projects - highways, football stadiums, schools, universities and hospitals - after themselves. Everything they did was news. Their speeches and daily activities dominated radio and television news and documentaries and newspapers.

#### **6.4.3.5 Descent into tyranny**

Once in power, African leaders became pre-occupied with hanging on to power at all cost. They swiftly moved to consolidate their power by putting in place measures that would ensure that they and they alone would rule for ever, or as President Jacob Zuma of South Africa always says “to rule until Jesus comes”. In the heyday of independence, any view different from that of the ruling party was viewed as counter-revolutionary. Anybody who dared expose corruption and wrong doing of the ruling elite was supposed to be silenced, better still, eliminated. Arbitrary measures – arrests, detentions, assassinations and other forms of harassment – were employed in dealing with political opponents and any form of dissent. In many countries, opposition parties were routinely banned, opposition politicians arrested on trumped-up charges while others were executed mostly on grounds of “national security” or attempting to “unconstitutionally remove a legitimate government”. Between 1960 and 1989, 150 elections had been held in twenty nine countries throughout the continent and opposition parties had not been allowed to win a single one. The majority of governments relied on secret police and agents to track down dissenters and spy on critics. The press was muzzled, newspapers were closed and entire newsrooms incarcerated. Constitutions were either amended, rewritten or constitutional provisions simply ignored. Elections were rigged and extreme violence was meted on the opposition supporters. They increasingly relied on fear as an instrument of control. Political activity was reduced to “palace intrigues”, as the ruling party elites manoeuvred for their own interests as rival factions competed for ascendancy. Ministers and senior party officials were often rotated and reshuffled with monotony, to prevent them from becoming a threat to the incumbent’s hold on power.

In their quest for greater, unchallenged and unimpeded control, the vehicle that African leaders commonly employed was the one-party state system. Almost all the fifty African

states were one-party states or military dictatorships in 1989. They argued that the new and fragile states, facing a myriad of challenges, needed strong governments which were best served by concentrating authority in a single, national party. Only such a party was an effective means of overcoming tribal divisions, to inspire a sense of nationhood and to mobilise the population for economic development. They argued that multi-party politics was a recipe for disaster that would easily deteriorate into fierce competition between rival tribes and ethnic groups. Since opposition parties tended to depend on tribal groups for support, they fiercely argued that they would destabilise the cause of nation-building and weaken the efficiency of the state (Meredith 2005:157). They were thus seen as a luxury which post-colonial states could ill-afford. Others argued that opposition parties were in fact alien to traditional African practices of government and socio-political organisation. It was concluded that only a one party-state system would expedite the economic development that the African continent badly needed.

The most eloquent advocate of the one-party state system was Julius Nyerere of Tanzania, who argued that the multi-party system was a Western creature which came about as a result of competition between socio-economic classes. But since African society was by its nature classless, there was, therefore, no basis for a multi-party and parliamentary system of the kind imposed by Europe on Africa. Opposition parties were no more than a distraction, with a destructive potential. The only voices to be heard from the so-called opposition parties were those of a few irresponsible and misguided individuals who exploited the very privileges of democracy, namely, freedoms of the media, association and of speech, to swerve the government from its duties to the citizens by creating problems of law and order (Meredith 2005:167).

In reality, however, the one-party state system was used by African leaders mostly to silence and crush any opposition to their regimes and to keep themselves in power. One-by-one, African leaders amassed ever greater personal power, spreading the arms of their control into the furthest reaches of society. Once in power, parties swiftly moved to amass a fortune from public monies, enough for them to win the next election. Banks, businesses and financial institutions were set up for that objective. Through dispensing patronage and extreme brutality, African leaders prolonged their stay in power.



Within a year of independence, Nkrumah passed laws that allowed the state to detain anyone without trial for a period of up to five years. The number of detentions kept rising. In 1958, 38 people were detained, in 1961, 311; in 1963, 586; in 1965, 1 200 (Meredith 2005:176). Detention laws were in practice used to silence critics and opponents and even to settle petty scores. The “Messiah of Africa” built a citadel of power around himself. He introduced new laws which enabled him to rule by decree, to reject decisions of parliament, to dismiss any public servant or members of the armed forces or judiciary when he saw fit. He maintained a complete grip over the media. Party supporters and his own ministers told him what they thought he wanted to hear, to boost his sense of superiority and importance. The civil service, trade unions, farmers’ organisations, student and youth groups were subordinated to his Convention People’s Party. He purged his own cabinet, axing ministers who were doubting his policies. He set up special courts to deal with political crimes, in which there was no right to appeal, and he appointed the judges himself. He attributed every set back to neo-imperialists plotting against him. He resented even mild criticism and refused to believe that anything was going wrong. After a failed plot to assassinate him in 1962, Nkrumah did a witch hunt, in which he ordered the arrest of three of his ministers. After another attempt in which a police constable was involved, he disarmed the police, sacked several officers and detained others. No longer trusting his security apparatus, he relied for protection increasingly on a personal security service recruited from his ancestral home. In 1964, through a referendum, Ghana was turned into a one-party state. Before the referendum, government newspapers warned those who would vote otherwise of the grievous consequences of such a vote:

Those who think that they can hide under the so-called secrecy of the polling booth to fool us must know that the days when we could be fooled are gone (Meredith 2005:189).

The opposition had already been silenced. Ghanaians voted “overwhelmingly” in favour of the one-party state, state media boasted.

Like most African leaders of the first generation, Prime Minister Milton Obote of Uganda defended a one-party state arguing that tribal loyalties tended to threaten the stability of the newly-independent country. What the country needed was a one-party state system to forge a sense of national unity. Enjoying power, his rule became increasingly despotic, declared himself executive President and suspended the constitution. He jailed several of his ministers.

Obote established a secret police largely recruited from his own tribe and allowing it to freely arrest and imprison suspected opponents. Taking advantage of Obote's absence from the country, Idi Amin, his army commander staged a coup. Within a few months, Amin feeling insecure, began mass killings to eliminate Obote's followers. He set up death squads to hunt down and assassinate army and police officers he suspected of opposing him.

As the country's economy was collapsing and the General becoming more and more unpopular with the populace, he turned his focus on the country's disliked Asian community hoping to revive his popularity. He expelled the Asians with British nationality from the country while his army looted their possessions. Some 50 000 people, most of them skilled professionals - doctors, technicians and administrators - are estimated to have left Uganda. The impact of the exodus on the economy was disastrous. Government revenues dropped by a massive forty percent (Meredith 2005:236).

The abortive invasion of Uganda by dissidents loyal to Obote in 1972 gave Amin the reason to intensify his repression of dissent. Thousands are reported to have died at the hands of his death squads, including the Anglican Archbishop of Kampala, Janani Jakaliya Luwum, who was arrested on charges of treason, allegedly tortured and assassinated just days after protesting against the regime's policies of arbitrary killings and unexplained disappearances. Makerere University's Vice Chancellor and the Chief Justice both disappeared without trace. When Amin was finally forced to flee, Uganda was ravaged, lawless, bankrupt with the stench of death estimated at over a quarter of a million people. Obote regained power in 1980 and continued his repression in a way not different from that of General Amin. 300 000 civilians are estimated to have died and by the time he was overthrown in 1985, Uganda was one of the poorest countries in the world.

Less than five months into independence, Equatorial Guinea under Nguema was plunged into brutality and coercion that lasted for over a decade. His inflammatory speeches made thousands of the Spaniards to flee the country for fear of their lives. Seven thousand are estimated to have fled the country, mostly business people, civil administrators, technicians and farmers. Ten of the twelve ministers in his first government were assassinated. He replaced them with members of his own family and clan. Senior security positions were given to his nephews and other close family members. His security forces were given infinite powers to detain, torture, rape and murder. A particular target was the country's educated

classes which he hated with passion. He also took savage reprisals against any hint of opposition. Thousands of suspected opponents were detained and murdered in prison. Two thirds of parliamentarians and most high-ranking civil servants were assassinated, imprisoned or driven into exile. Son of a feared witch doctor, Nguema reportedly used witchcraft both to prop up his legitimacy and to keep the local population in terrified submission.

Before each visit abroad, Nguema routinely killed political prisoners to dissuade other opponents from conspiring against him in his absence (Meredith 2005:240). Death sentences were carried out with extreme brutality. In one case, he ordered the execution of all former lovers of his current mistresses and also ordered the murder of husbands of women he coveted (Meredith 2005:240). The central bank was closed after the director was publicly executed. All foreign exchange was delivered to him and he hoarded it together with huge amounts the local currency in his many mansions. On his orders, all libraries were closed, all newspapers were shut down. The last remaining catholic schools were ordered to shut down in 1974 and from then on, learners were only taught political slogans. All religious activities and the use of Christian names were banned. Almost all churches were locked up or converted into storerooms for weapons for use by his militia. Running short of money, he resorted to ransoming foreigners for tens of thousands of dollars each. Robert Klintenberg (cited in Meredith 2005:242) described the country as “a land of fear and devastation no better than a concentration camp - the cottage industry Dachau of Africa”. Over 50 000 people out of a total population of 300 000 were killed, while 125 000 fled into exile. His end came when his nephew Obiang and other members of his family who feared that unless he was toppled, they might go down with him, staged a coup. He was charged with genocide, embezzlement of public funds and paralysis of the economy. He was sentenced to death by firing squad.

In Guinea, Touré lived in a world of conspiracies, speaking frequently of a permanent plot organised by western powers and other enemies of the “Guinean Revolution”, to overthrow him. He used these plots, real or fictitious, as a pretext for liquidating his opponents, whether or not there was evidence against them. His regime became notorious for arbitrary imprisonment, show trials, the use of torture and public executions, forcing about one fifth of the country’s population to flee to neighbouring countries. His own cabinet was not spared. More than fifty of his ministers were either shot dead or hanged, or died in detention, or served prison sentences (Meredith 2005: 271).

First was an alleged conspiracy by French nationals in cohorts with Guinean dissidents to assassinate him just two years into independence. Then was the teachers' plot after teachers had gone on strike for more money. Then there was the traders plot after a group of traders had formed their own opposition party. When a group of market women marched to the Presidential palace in Conakry, government troops opened fire on them. Touré blamed a fifth column. On the pretext that a "fifth column of internal stooges of imperialism and neocolonialism" was at work, after a plot by the Portuguese from the neighbouring Guinea Bissau to remove him from power, hundreds of people including cabinet ministers, ambassadors and party leaders were arrested and put on trial before a "supreme revolutionary court". None of them was given an opportunity to defend themselves, or the opportunity to have legal representation, or even to see or talk to the judges. Fifty eight of the accused were hanged in public. Touré viewed a medicine shortage in 1972 as a plot by doctors to discredit the revolution. He described a cholera outbreak the following year as a counter-revolutionary plot. Even Guinea's defeat to Morocco at the finals of the African Cup of Nations soccer tournament in 1976 was viewed as a plot.

In Zaire, Mobutu adopted the one-party state system and made himself the country's sole guide and mentor. He is quoted as saying:

In our African tradition, there are never two chiefs; there is sometimes a natural heir to the chief, but can anyone tell me that he has ever known a village that has two chiefs? That is why we Congolese, in the desire to conform to the traditions of our continent, have resolved to group all the energies of the citizens of our country under the banner of a single national party (Meredith 2005:295-296).

He laid down "Mobutuism" as an ideology, to which everyone was instructed to abide by. Mobutuism had the full force of law and any form of non-conformity was regarded as an offence against the constitution. Mobutu accumulated vast personal power, ruling by decree, controlling all appointments and promotions and deciding on the allocation of government resources (Meredith 2005:296). He ordered cities, towns and provinces with foreign names to be changed to local ones to "create an authentic national spirit". Congo was changed to Zaire. Zairians with European names were ordered to drop them for African ones. Pastors were warned that if caught baptising a local child with a European name they would be jailed for five years. Mobutu himself changed his name to *Mobutu Sese Seko Kuku Ngbendu Wa Za*

*Manga*, which means “The warrior who knows no defeat because of his endurance and inflexible will and is all-powerful, leaving fire in his wake as he goes from conquest to conquest” (Meredith 2005:296).

To maintain his hold on power, Mobutu relied on a number of personal military and police units, which were commanded by an elite group of officers from his home village, to whom he dispensed patronage. He kept his ministers and senior government officials in a constant state of flux, moving them regularly, firing them or imprisoning them to ensure they posed no threats. He had to be consulted on every decision, including petty ones. Nguza Karl-i-Bond, one of his former Prime Ministers, remarked:

Nothing is possible in Zaire without Mobutu. He created Zaire. He fathered the Zairian people. He grew the trees and the plants. He brings rain and good weather. You do not go to the toilet without the authorization of *Le Guide*. Zairians would be nothing without him. Mobutu has obligations to nobody, but everybody has obligations to him (Meredith 2005:297).

Within weeks of independence, Banda’s rule had already descended into tyranny. In a fit of anger, he dismissed ministers who challenged his authority and went on to run Malawi as his personal fiefdom, demanding, not just obedience, but obsequiousness. Declaring himself President for life, Banda did not tolerate dissent or criticism of any sort and no one was allowed to question his decisions. He is reported as saying: “Anything I say is law. Literally law. It is a fact in this country” (Meredith 2005:165). In 1965, he is quoted as saying: “If, to maintain political stability and efficient administration, I have to detain 10 000 or 100 000, I will do it,” (Meredith 2005:176). By the end of his rule, he had incarcerated tens of thousands of Malawians in detention centres and sending out his secret police and militia, the Young Pioneers, to deal with opponents at home and abroad. His rule was sometimes likened to that of one of the old Maravi kings, who ruled with divine right and absolute authority. Bokassa was notorious for brutality and suppressing revolts, leading Western media to dub him the “Butcher of Bangui. As he became more and more unpopular, his brutality increased. An independent judiciary commission of enquiry noted that the massacre of 100 striking students in April 1979, happened under the orders and *direct participation of Bokassa* (Meredith 2005:230) (*italics ours*). Witnesses claimed that the emperor himself showed up in prison and participated in the beating and flogging of arrested strikers. Prisoners were severely flogged

in public. Some were beaten to death with hammers and chains on the orders of Bokassa. The emperor himself was known to hold kangaroo courts in one of his villas, sentencing people to be thrown to hungry lions and crocodiles.

Houphouët-Boigny viewed political debate and criticism as impediments to economic development. There were no contested elections held for twenty years. Political power was in the hands of a small elite group surrounding the President. In Kenya, Kenyatta was ruthless in dealing with any challenge to his authority. He fell out of favour with his vice President Oginga Odinga who resigned to form his own party. He was harassed at every turn, was arrested, his party banned and leaving Kenya a one-party state. In Ethiopia, Major Mengistu Haile Mariam launched his campaign of “red terror”, arming civilian vigilantes and unleashing them on his opponents. Armed gangs hunted down intellectuals and all those deemed to be “counter-revolutionaries.” They were all wiped out. Dead bodies were left on road sides labelled “oppositionists”. Thousands died and thousands more were imprisoned in the red terror campaign.

Two decades into independence, Africa was notorious for its big men, tyrants who strutted the stage, tolerating neither opposition nor dissent, rigging elections, refusing to step down, interfering with the judiciary, intimidating the media, stifling universities, demanding obsequiousness and making themselves extremely rich. Three decades into independence, not a single African head of state had allowed himself to be voted out of office. Of the 150 heads of state who had trodden the African stage, only six had voluntarily relinquished power: Senghor, after twenty years, Cameroon’s Ahmadu Ahidjo, after 22 years and Nyerere after 23 years in power (Meredith 2005:379). Some first generation African leaders still hung on to power even in old age. At an advanced age of 84 and after 29 years in power, Houphouët-Boigny remained as adamantly in charge as before:

There is no number two, three or four. In Cote d’Ivoire there is only number one: that is me and I do not share my decisions (Meredith 2005:379).

Since coming to power, Houphouët-Boigny had won all six presidential elections with an average of 99 percent of the vote (Meredith 2005:379). After thirty years in power and at a very advanced age of 96, with clear evidence of infirmity, Banda showed no signs of willingness to leave office. He stood for Malawi’s first truly democratic election in 1994 and was thrashed by

Bakili Muluzi. Mobutu had ruled Zaire for 32 years by the time he was overthrown by Laurent Desire Kabila. Kaunda ruled Zambia for 27 years until he was ousted by Frederick Chiluba in 1991. Touré had been the dictator of Guinea for 26 years until he died in 1984. General Moussa Traore of Mali had been in power for 23 years until he was overthrown by popular protests and a military coup in 1991. In Togo General Gnassingbe Eyedema held power for 38 years until he died in office in 2005. El Hadj Omar Bongo Ondimba was President of Gabon for 42 years from 1967 until his death in 2009, becoming the world's longest-serving non-monarch ruler. José Eduardo dos Santos, long-serving President of Angola, announced that he would retire in early 2018. That would be after 39 years of leading one of the most corrupt regimes in Africa and after having amassed a fortune for his family and silencing his opposition, while, nearly 70 percent of the population lived below the poverty datum line. President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea, snatched power from his uncle, less than two months before dos Santos took office. In 2017, he was still in charge and would be President for 38 years. Sudan's General Omar al Bashir was still in power in 2017, 28 years after coming to power. An arrest warrant was issued for him by the International Criminal Court (ICC) on crimes against humanity and war charges allegedly committed in the Darfur crisis in which hundreds of thousands have died and millions displaced.

The second generation of African leaders was no different from the first. Only four years in office, Daniel arap Moi, turned Kenya into a one-party state. Like most African leaders, he harassed and imprisoned opponents with his militia, made extensive use of torture; wiped out press freedom; gagged trade unions, stole elections and turned the civil service into a party machine. Yoweri Museveni of Uganda came to power after overthrowing the corrupt and brutal dictatorship of Obote in 1986, with international acclaim promising to restore security and respect for human rights. He ruled the country through a "no-party" system which in reality operated little differently from a one-party system. In an interview with *Africa Report* he defended his ideology thus:

Multi-party democracy would have no problem if the parties would polarize themselves along lines of principle, on policy issues... But they do not. Most of the time, they polarize themselves along sectarian lines - either on religious lines... or on a tribal basis as is the case in a number of countries... Our fear of multi-partyism is not in the multi-parties themselves, it is in the effect that it will have on the unity of our people and stability. We want democracy... and we favour the form of democracy without parties,

where you more or less have a beauty contest (Margaret Novicki 1983).

Like those before him, Museveni became autocratic, has been accused of rigging elections, silencing opposition parties, harassing the media and not willing to relinquish power. In 2005, he held a referendum to scrap the constitutional provision that limited the presidential term. In 2017, he had been in power for 31 years.

Paul Barthélemy Biya'a bi Mvondo (Paul Biya) of Cameroon came to power after the surprise resignation of President Ahmadou Ahidjo in 1982. He immediately dismissed calls for a multi-party system only to give in after domestic and international pressure. He was accused of running a reign of terror, characterised by intimidation, violence, fraud, and electoral irregularity. In 2009, Parade Magazine ranked Biya nineteenth in its Top 20 list of "The World's Worst Dictators." He changed the constitution so that he would run for another term and to rule by decree.

At the beginning of the third millennium, the continent was in a sorry state. Floods, famine, war, disease and poverty were wreaking havoc. Sierra Leone and Congo were burning from the flames of civil conflict. HIV and AIDS and Ebola outbreak had severe consequences for the economy of the region, as they undermined trade and investment. In other parts of sub-Saharan Africa, a deterioration of the security situation could also have severe regional spillovers. Dubbed "Hopeless Africa" by *The Economist* (May 2000), sub-Saharan Africa's prospects, as the second decade of the 21st century comes to an end, are as bleak as ever before. Cote d'Ivoire has just emerged from a ruinous civil war in which President Laurent Gbagbo refused to hand over power to Alassane Ouattara. The country was laid waste by one African leader's obsession with clinging on to power. Somalia has since ceased to exist as a state. It is now a failed state that has disintegrated into total chaos. The whole land is like a black patch on the vast continent, with no central government and as many war lords as there are villages. Barely two years after gaining independence from the Sudan in 2011, South Sudan - one of the most underdeveloped countries on earth - descended into a bitter civil war between the government of Salva Kiir and his former deputy Riek Machar, a conflict that has now taken ethnic dimensions, amid warnings that the country is on the verge of a genocide. An estimated 50 000 people have been killed so far and millions are displaced and are facing severe food shortages. As of 2016, it had the second highest score on the Fragile States Index (formerly the Failed States Index). It would be a misnomer to regard the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a



state. It is to all intents and purposes, in a state of “suspended statehood”. The central government lost control of a substantial part of the country to rebels and dissidents. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism has intensified security headaches for African leaders. In Nigeria, the militant group, Boko Haram has a free reign in some parts of the country where it raids villages at will kidnapping girls and women, freely recruiting boys and executing men, among other horrible acts. In Kenya, al-Shabaab militants from Somalia launch raids into the country with devastating consequences. Mozambique is on knife edge as opposition leader, Afonso Dhlakama of Renamo, is threatening to plunge Mozambique into a civil war once again. In Burundi, President Pierre Nkurunziza openly defied the constitution by standing for election for a third term, prompting revolts from many Burundians. The disturbances are estimated to have claimed over 300 lives by December 2015 with about 215 000 others fleeing the country.

Compounding the plight of Africa has been the scourge of HIV and AIDS. Though strides have been made to cut the rate of new infections and AIDS related deaths, the region is still in crisis. After more than 30 years of devastation, struggle and loss, Sub-Saharan Africa has the most serious HIV and AIDS epidemic in the world. The 2013 UNAIDS report notes that of the 35 million people living with HIV globally, 24.7 million are living in sub-Saharan Africa (accounting for 71 percent of the global total) and that nearly one in every 20 adults is living with the virus in this region (UNAIDS 2013:18). In the same year, there were an estimated 1.5 million new HIV infections and 1.1 million AIDS-related deaths accounting for 74 percent of all the people dying from AIDS-related causes in 2013 (UNAIDS 2013:9).

Africa remains the world’s poorest region, falling further and further behind other regions. More than half of the population of the huge continent is living below the poverty datum line. In fact poverty levels continue to increase. With its enormous mineral resources, the continent’s economic output is still less than two percent of the world GDP (Meredith 2005:692). A 2010 report by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) indicated that there were 239 million malnourished people in the sub-region. It noted that the proportion of undernourished people in sub-Saharan Africa remains highest, at 30 percent in 2010 (FAO 2010:11). Of the 22 countries in a state of protracted crisis and thus needing a lot of attention, noted by the organisation, seventeen are from sub-Saharan Africa (FAO 2010:12). While noting that overall, Africa has had one of the fastest rates of improvement in human development over the past two decades, the UNDP adds that the region has the lowest average levels of human development compared to other regions in the world (UNDP 2016:3). Abdulqawi Yusuf (cited in Yannis

2003:64) summed up the situation of post-colonial Africa observing that so many decades

after 1960, the symbolic year of Africa's independence, many African countries continue to experience serious difficulty in the process of consolidation of their statehood... Some African nations have reduced themselves to a state of "suspended statehood" in which there may still be recognised frontiers, but everything inside has become anarchy and lawlessness.

Robert Jackson (1987:526) weighs in arguing that post-colonial state-building resulted in the formation of what he calls "quasi-states":

The state in Africa is ... more a personal- or primordial-favouring political arrangement than a public-regarding realm. Government is less an agency to provide political goods such as law, order, security, justice, or welfare and more a fountain of privilege, wealth and power for a small elite who control it ... Many governments are incapable of enforcing their writ throughout their territory. In more than a few countries... some regions have escaped from national control ... [and the states] are fairly loose patchworks of plural allegiances and identities somewhat reminiscent of medieval Europe (Jackson 1987:527-528).

The words of Edem Kodjo, Secretary General of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) can apply to any part of the post-independence period:

Our ancient continent is on the brink of disaster, hurting towards the abyss of confrontation, caught in the grip of violence, sinking into the dark night of bloodshed and death... Gone are the smiles, the joys of life (Meredith 2005:292).

But what might account for this status quo when in fact the coming of independence on the continent was greeted with enthusiasm and optimism? What really went wrong after that initial promise of taking Africa to stardom?

#### 6.4.3.6 Making sense of the senseless

A question that should be asked from the onset is: was independence the best option for Africa? Senghor and Houphouët-Boigny, among other Francophone leaders, thought otherwise. “Independence has no positive content. It is not a solution,” Senghor remarked. Houphouët-Boigny (cited in Meredith 2005:69) added: “It is not the shell of independence which counts; it is the contents: the economic contents, the social contents and the human contents.” Instead of independence, Senghor advocated a new political federation between the former colonial master, France and Africa. His view was that independence for small political entities, with weak economies and few resources would be no more than “pseudo-independence”. The future lay, for him, in large federations of states working together with imperial powers to mobilise European resources to help Africa combat poverty, disease and ignorance (Meredith 2005:61).

Probably they were right. Most, if not all, of the ten Francophone countries that were granted independence in 1960, such as Chad, Niger, Gabon, Benin and Mali, were not economically viable. Chad, Niger and Mali were landlocked, mostly desert, thinly populated and desperately poor. Mauritania was no more than a desert which, until 1954, the colonialists had seen unfit for their habitation and so had ruled it from the Senegal. Upper Volta had only become a separate territory in 1947. Even Senegal, the second richest of the French colonies in *l’Afrique Noire*, relied heavily on French subsidies. South Sudan was not prepared for self-government. The region had no organised political parties until 1953. It also did not have any sense of national consciousness that united its incongruent tribes. Despite all this, they were candidates for independence and post-colonial statehood. Some of the African leaders, such as Amin, had very little formal education. Nguema was of very limited intelligence and had, on three occasions, failed to pass examinations that would qualify him for a civil service career, only to succeed the fourth time due to Spanish favouritism. Most African leaders had not had any experience in government, even at a local level. Some had been freedom fighters who emerged from the bush straight to state house on the eve of independence. Lumumba was only 35 years old and ill-prepared to manage a complex country as Congo. As discussed above, no Congolese had acquired any experience of government or parliamentary life and that no national or even provincial election had ever been held in the country. Surely it would be too much to expect normal governance from such a scenario.

Furthermore, political systems that they were to adopt at independence were recent transplants. Africans had little experience of representative democracy, the institutions having been introduced by the British and the French (in some cases) too late to alter the established character of the colonial state. The more durable imprint they left behind was of authoritarian regimes in which governors and their officials wielded enormous personal power. To this should be added that the fact that the history of Africa hitherto had been one of violence and repression. Colonialism was a very violent process. Africans under colonialism were violently repressed and suppressed. State structures were instruments of repression. Traditions of autocratic governance, paternalism and dirigisme were embedded in the institutions the new leaders inherited. African nationalist leaders inherited these same repressive and exploitative states and perfected the art of repression and exploitation. The state of the underdevelopment (socio-political and economic) of Africa today can be viewed as a result of a history of exploitation, suppression and colonial atrocities perpetrated by European imperialists. Thus a study of the period of the partition as well as that of colonial Africa is essential for an understanding of the present situation in Africa.

Against this background, Jennifer Milliken and Keith Krause (2003:10) argue that in retrospect it was somewhat naive to expect that the new post-colonial African states would build legitimate nations, provide wealth, and guarantee security within a few decades of independence. Such expectation, they argue, could only make sense if the idea of the state is plucked out of its historical context, and regarded as an institutional form that owes little or nothing to the historical forces that created it (Milliken and Krause 2003:10).

This is an incisive observation. Most of the “states” that were inherited at independence were actually pseudo-or quasi-states. These “states” were treated “as if” they possessed the full attributes of sovereignty, even if they evidently did not in fact do so (Clapham 2003:32). Such states did not qualify for statehood by the criterion of international law in use by the 1930s, which entailed the existence of effective government, with centralised administrative and legislative organs. Statehood was regarded as the only possible form of governance and socio-political organisation for the world - and this despite the pseudo-statehood of many of the candidate states. Yet they were nonetheless granted independence and their governments were recognised by other governments as *bona fide* representatives of those territories and populations. Pseudo-statehood was converted into real statehood, with disastrous

consequences for both continent and people. Such pseudo- or quasi-states were never really states, to begin with. The puzzle is not how and why they may fail, but how and why they exist or persist at all (Milliken and Krause 2003:10). To regard some of these states as if they were sovereign players at par with others in the international arena is a travesty of reality.

We noted earlier that the state in Africa is a creation of imperialist powers and was established to integrate Africa into the world capitalist system and extract surplus for the imperial bourgeoisie. That was its *raison d'être*; it was never designed to be independent, or to cease being a source of cheap raw materials and labour for the imperial industries (Mentan 2010:29). Its political and economic structures were conditioned to meet the repressive as well as the exploitative needs of the imperial state, leaving the former African territories largely untouched by its developmental goals and so unable to develop after the fall of colonialism. President Olympio remarked:

The effect of the policy of the colonial powers has been the economic isolation of peoples who live side by side, in some instances within a few miles of each other, while directing the flow of resources to the metropolitan countries. For example, although I can call Paris from my office telephone here in Lomé, I cannot place a call to Lagos in Nigeria only 250 miles away. Again, while it takes a short time to send an air-mail letter to Paris, it takes several days for the same letter to reach Accra, a mere 132 miles away... The productive central regions of Togo, Dahomey (Benin) and Ghana are as remote from each other as if they were on separate continents (Meredith 2005:153).

Independence made very little, if any, difference to the colonial state in the era of global capitalist expansion. Instead of colonialism, Africa has since independence been in a state of what Nkrumah liked to refer to as “neo-colonialism”. This is where formal political independence is achieved but economic control - and hence indirect political power - continues to lie with overseas powers and companies (Carmody 2011:3). It is also what Nyerere referred to as “flag independence”, a situation in which real economic control continued to rest with the former colonial powers. The African elites who took power at independence did little to structurally alter the economies, as they joined the “club” of the imperial bourgeoisie, which they had been prevented from joining by law and colonial practise. In reality, they serve as the foremen to keep the peasants producing a surplus to be

accumulated by the foreign bourgeoisie and some parasitic native elites. They simply copied what was before them. Thus the structure of post-colonial economies remained largely unchanged in the post-colonial era. The World Bank (1989:3) arrived at the same conclusion:

The post-independence development efforts failed because the strategy was misconceived. Governments made a dash for "modernisation," copying, but not adapting, Western models. The result was poorly designed public investments in industry; too little attention to peasant agriculture; too much intervention in areas in which the state lacked managerial, technical, and entrepreneurial skills; and too little effort to foster grassroots development. This top-down approach demotivated ordinary people, whose energies most needed to be mobilised in the development effort.

Ibbo Mandaza (1986) argues that the post-colonial African state cannot achieve its development goals because it is more an extension of Europe than an independent region. While it is sculpted on the template of the European bourgeois state, it unfortunately does not have an anchor class, in the form of a national bourgeois that would guide it on a developmental trajectory and provide it with an autonomy to institute a truly national agenda (Mandaza 1986:82). With regards to the European state, the order was such that the bourgeoisie emerged first and the state then emerged around that class. For that reason, the state emerged stronger. But with regards to Africa, the order was reversed – the state came first and it was hoped that an anchor class would immediately emerge. Quite frankly that is a major handicap of the post-colonial African state. The states lacked that strong bourgeoisie anchor class because colonialism prevented it from being created. The anchor class would have enabled it to craft a developmental agenda that the post-colonial state badly needs. For that reason, Mandaza (1986:82) argues, the post-colonial African state is a “hostage state” which is naturally weak. It was born weak and dependent. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) goes as far as to deny that the African state can be called a post-colonial state because it is still under the same “colonial power matrix” as during formal colonialism, making it highly unlikely for it to extricate itself from this snare. The global order is such that weaker countries ought to get instructions from the West. Because of their dependent nature, they cannot implement policies that have not been approved by the West. The African state is under round-the-clock surveillance from the imperial masters. They cannot rebel against the Western imperial masters for there will be a very high price to pay. Like Sennacherib’s brutal siege of Jerusalem after Hezekiah’s rebellion, Libyan leader, Colonel Muammar Gaddafi and

Zimbabwean dictator, Robert Mugabe, would be punished severely by the West for defying their rules. This point will be expanded in Chapter Seven.

Africanists (e.g. Young 1988; Hyden 1999) have questioned the assumption that statehood is an appropriate institutional model for Africa. They question whether Africa would not be better served by some political structures different from the state which, after all is an imposition from outside. Instead of taking the state for granted, they now treat it as a major impediment to development (Milliken and Krause 2003:11-12). They thus suggest that African states must be overhauled in order for development to succeed. Mentan (2010:2) adds that African developmental goals cannot be achieved by the present state in Africa, and suggests that Africans will have to restructure the state away from its client-collaborator existential situation if these are to be met.

Indigenous elites cherished the state system because their own claims and qualifications to rule, the goals that they sought, and the whole ideology of anti-colonial nationalism which they espoused, were intimately bound up with the maintenance of statehood (Clapham 1996:30). They never challenged the borders themselves. On the contrary, they simply upheld their inherited boundaries, since there was no alternative conception of where the borders “ought” to be, through which to challenge them (Clapham 1996:46-50).

#### **6.4.4 Conclusion**

In this overview chapter the focus has been on the political economy of post-colonial Africa. We looked at the governance systems of pre-colonial Africa, the scramble and partition of Africa, Africa under colonialism, as well as post-colonial Africa. We also noted the internal and external constraints to development on the continent. The African elites who came to power at independence, through their inexperience, politics of the belly and patronage, and maladministration, dimmed the hope that the world had on the day that Nkrumah was inaugurated in Ghana. Most importantly, attention has been given to the foreign state and a state in the service of capitalism as an impediment to development. We have thus set the context within which the political economy of post-colonial Zimbabwe should be understood. In the following chapter we focus on that political economy.

## CHAPTER SEVEN: POST-COLONIAL ZIMBABWEAN POLITICAL ECONOMY

*The reason why the story of Zimbabwe is more than a tale about a remote corner of the world is that in a small geographical space and within one life time we have seen acted out a play of forces that have characterised our century. It is as if the unities of classical theatre have been observed on a historical stage. And the story does have all the makings of a classical drama - the inevitability of tragedy (de Waal 1990:v)*

### 7.0 Introduction

At midnight on 18 April 1980, the Union Jack was lowered for the very last time, to the applause of millions of Zimbabweans. After so many years of oppression and repression, the black majority were finally free and had elected a government of their choice. The country was pregnant with promise. Why not, when it had the second most advanced economy and the most educated African population on the continent? Immediately, the new leaders did not disappoint, announcing the much-praised policy of reconciliation between former oppressor and oppressed. Great strides were made as social services were extended to the black majority. However, the honey moon did not last long as the realities of being a post-colony began to catch up with the country. The economy was deteriorating rapidly as the ruling elite resorted to predation. The dream turned into a nightmare. Zimbabwe was a pale shadow of its former confident self. It went on to record the second highest rate of inflation in recorded history, had a central bank but no currency of its own. Once an industrial hub, the country ended up relying on the informal economy. The country had descended into authoritarianism, violence, chaos, deprivation and decay. Millions of its people had crossed the borders looking for greener pastures. Poverty was wreaking havoc on the land. Never before had a modern country outside a war zone collapsed so far so fast. What can account for this phenomenal and unprecedented decline? Were solely internal factors to blame or there were other equally powerful external factors? What role did the colonial inheritance play in this political economy? What was the role of the state in this drama?

In Chapter Six we explored the political economy of post-colonial Africa. The idea was to give the broader context within which the Zimbabwean political economy can be situated and



understood. Zimbabwe shares many constraints to nationhood and development with other post-colonies. This chapter will start with a brief discussion of the political economy of Rhodesia. This is done to note the continuities between Rhodesia and Zimbabwe and the influence of the former on the latter. A discussion of the key features of the post-colonial Zimbabwean political economy from the lofty heights of the euphoria of the defeat of white settler colonialism to 2017 - the year in which veteran leader, Robert Mugabe, was forced to relinquish power - is the major pre-occupation of the chapter. We will also discuss the challenges and constraints that have confronted the state in attempting to build a democratic, egalitarian and inclusive society. In so doing, the discussion will determine the extent to which this political economy can be labelled a political economy of terror.

### ***7.1 The political economy of Rhodesia***

The land bounded by the Zambezi and Limpopo rivers, and by Botswana in the southwest and Mozambique in the east, and measuring some 391 000km<sup>2</sup>, has since April 1980, been called Zimbabwe. The name comes from its most spectacular stone structures built by local people around the 13<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century (Kriger 1992:1). The beauty of the land always fascinated the earliest white missionaries, historians and explorers. The earliest writers waxed enthusiastic about the grandeur of the mighty Victoria Falls, the haunting beauty of the Matopos, the rock outcrops of the plains of Mashonaland, the misty loveliness of the Nyanga Mountains and the endless blue horizons, among other splendid features of the land. For imperialists, it was the land worth fighting for. The occupation of the land legally commenced on 29 October 1889, with the incorporation of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) - the embodiment and vanguard of capitalist profitability and imperialist expansionism in southern Africa - by Royal Charter, giving it occupation and governance rights (Ncube 2001:101). The BSAC was a mining prospecting and landholding company whose Directors included Cecil John Rhodes, George Cawston and Alfred Beit. Unlike other colonies, the land was colonised, not from an imperial metropolis, but by a private company. It became a company asset, paying dividends to shareholders who had invested with excess capital that could not find profitable outlets in Europe (Bond and Manyanya 2003:3). The colony was named Rhodesia (later Southern Rhodesia) in honour of Rhodes.

Inspired by German geologist Karl Mauch who claimed to have discovered a potential “second Rand”, the company crossed the Limpopo hoping to profit from gold mining. The BSAC invested heavily in infrastructure but the investment in the colony was a financial disaster. Gold was not found in large quantities as the company had anticipated. To recoup its losses, the company encouraged the immigration of white Europeans to invest their capital in the colony, particularly in farming. Within a short period, there was a heavy white settler presence, the largest in any colony in Africa north of the Limpopo. Attention was now focused on land expropriation on a massive scale. Encroachment on African land by the settlers provoked African resistance which has come to be known as the first *Chimurenga/Umvukela*. With the brutal crushing of African resistance by the settlers, Southern Rhodesia was firmly in the hands of the company and thus begun the process of reorienting the African societies of the colony to the capitalist world (Clarke 1980:15). Africans were violently dispossessed of their land as large tracts of the most fertile land were parcelled out to white settlers who were coming in their droves from Europe and South Africa. Missionaries were also apportioned their own swathes of land, with the Jesuits alone eventually possessing 180 000 acres (de Waal 1990:16). The migrants became an instant petit-bourgeoisie class on the colony’s finest land. From the occupation until 1923, the country was ruled by the company with occasional British Colonial Office intervention (Clarke 1980:16). For those three decades, the BSAC was also the state, the company *qua* state (Cokorinos 1984:15). There can be no closer relation between state and economy than what existed in Southern Rhodesia under company rule (Cokorinos 1984:15). The BSAC was not interested in creating an empire, but in the exploitation of resources to make profits for its investors.

At the expiry of the Charter in 1923, the majority in the whites-only election chose the “Self-Governing Status”, as opposed to amalgamation with South Africa that the company had hoped for (Bond and Manyanya 2003:4). Southern Rhodesia became a British colony with the right to self-government. Britain, as the colonial power, reserved the right to intervene in the country’s legislation. Apart from South Africa, nowhere else on the continent did a colonial power give self-government to settlers in its colony (Kriger 1992:2). The state replaced the company as the key economic actor. The white farming bourgeoisie formed the centre of the class structure and determined the colony’s political and economic development.

From the very inception of the colony, the mode of production of Southern Rhodesia was strikingly capitalist. The colonial economy was a creation of foreign capital designed to supply minerals and agricultural products to Western countries. Duncan G. Clarke (1980:168) notes that it is difficult to find a sub-Saharan African country that is comparable to Zimbabwe in the way in which the role of foreign capital had been so long established. The large settler presence was meant to ensure maximum extraction and exploitation of the resources of the land. For the establishment of a viable white settler community, maximum accumulation and profit maximisation, systematic racial discrimination against the natives was essential. Racism was used by the white ruling elite in an attempt to internalise in Africans the real or imaginary differences between the coloniser and the colonised (Zvobgo 1986:319). It served to consolidate white settler security and make Africans internalise the idea that they were indeed inferior and by so doing, white settlers would be guaranteed dominance in the socio-economic and political spheres. For the racial project to succeed, it was necessary to eliminate all forms of African competition. Brian Raftopoulos (1986:276) notes that the “native policy” was meant to ensure the development of the natives in such a way that they will come as little as possible into conflict or competition with the settlers, socially, economically and politically. The settlers feared that a rapid rise in social mobility of Africans would threaten their perceived superiority, power and privilege. The system was therefore crafted to create functionaries rather than competitors in any sphere of life within the colonial system. By pre-empting competition from natives in all aspects of national life, the colonial system was simultaneously pre-empting the rise of an African bourgeoisie class (Mandaza 1999:88).

Many obstacles were created to keep Africans out of any meaningful participation in the economy except as cheap labour or petty business operators. Purposive and systematic measures and policy instruments, including physical and political coercion, legislative discrimination and a whole host of direct and indirect economic measures, designed to marginalise Africans and serve minority settler class interests were introduced. These disadvantaged the native and thus kept him in perpetual dependence on the white settler. The key actor on this stage was the state, which was, to all intents and purposes, an instrument in the hands of the white bourgeoisie class and over which it had dominant influence. As an organ of capital, the colonial state was an apparatus that was essentially repressive to anything that was an obstacle to capitalist penetration and the white bourgeoisie accumulation

project (Sachikonye 1986:249). Land ownership patterns, agricultural policy, colonial education and labour relations all conformed to the general racist nature of separate development.

Mass African nationalism in the colony started in earnest in the 1950s. The nationalists mobilised around issues of universal suffrage, anti-discrimination and improved standards of living for black people. While the nationalist movement was initially reformist, demanding a reform of the political economy to make it democratic, it later developed a radical nationalism that sought to dismantle white settler colonialism and attain national independence. The nationalists took up arms and waged a liberation war. Eventually, the colonial government was forced to negotiate with the armed guerrilla groups culminating in the Lancaster House Agreement (LHA) that brought independence. It is important to give a brief critique of this agreement for it was to later determine the socio-political and economic relations in the post-colonial period.

## **7.2 The Lancaster House Agreement (LHA)**

The biggest winner at the Lancaster House Conference was British imperialism. That was quite expected because, as Mandaza (1986:3) notes, the conference provided imperialism with an opportunity to be a referee in a match in which it had vested interests. Imperialism tried to resolve the problem it had created in its own favour. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:15) agrees maintaining that Lancaster House was the “political maternity ward” for the delivery of truncated African re-birth with the former colonial masters, Britain and the US, overseeing the whole process and channelling it straight into a neo-colonial direction. The two midwives, as representatives of international finance capital, were bent on facilitating the birth of a “neo-colonial” state rather than a “post-colonial state.” Their aim was that the new-born baby should not unlock itself from the grip of imperialism (Mandaza 1986:63). The LHA was, to all intents and purposes, a compromise between the transfer of political power to blacks and the entrenchment of the economic privileges of the settlers and international capital. Bond (2003:64) counts the LHA among the “negotiated elite power-transfers” which did nothing to identify and rectify the sins of prior dictatorships but left the economic *status quo* intact. Roger Southall (Unpublished, p. 1) adds that the LHA was an attempt by the British to allow independence on minimalist terms which would protect the interests of both international capital and the country’s white settler community.

Probably the greatest compromise imperialism got from the African nationalist leaders relates to the all-important land question. In the first ten years of independence, land reform would be carried out on a “willing buyer willing seller” basis. There would be no compulsory expropriation of land. Furthermore, compensation for acquired land was to be in foreign currency. The new government would also guarantee the pensions of all white Rhodesian civil servants. Twenty of the hundred seats in parliament were to be reserved for whites - a huge victory for a small group of less than 250 000 people - further entrenching white power. When Zimbabwe was granted majority rule, imperialism had already succeeded in creating the kind of state in which it would continue to have a stake and wield influence with regard to the direction of policy, which remained broadly within the capitalist framework (Mandaza 1986:57). The white settlers found themselves with such political and economic guarantees as would be the envy of any former colonisers in any decolonising process (Mandaza 1986:3). Decolonisation in Rhodesia was actually a departure from the orthodox one that handed over political power to a black leadership with very few or no political guarantees for the white settlers.

### ***7.3 A decade of promise***

On 18 April 1980, a nation was born with much excitement and international acclamation, after decades of injustice, suffering and deprivation and a prolonged war of liberation in which tens of thousands lost limb and life. The victory of Mugabe’s ZANU PF was hailed as an incredible victory for African people and a momentous defeat of imperialism in southern Africa (Astrow 1983:1). Zimbabwe was a nation full of potential and the envy of most countries in sub-Saharan Africa. A beacon of hope and the economic pride of a gloomy continent, on it were pinned the hopes for a turn-around in southern Africa. Here was a nation that had a real chance of being an example of multi-racialism, an engine of regional economic growth, a promising multi-party democracy and a pillar of strength in the struggle against the last vestiges of white minority rule (Baker 1984:164). This newfound status among the nations created high hopes and expectations of a prosperous life from an excited citizenry. An obvious magnet for international finance capital, predictions were rife that FDI would flow into the country in substantial amounts. Prospects for fundamental change in the country were very favourable.

This expectation was not unfounded because the economic structure which Zimbabwe inherited from Rhodesia was unlike that of any other newly independent black African country north of the Limpopo. It was more sophisticated, technologically self-reliant, internally integrated and industrialised than any other in black Africa north of the Limpopo (Gordon 1984:130). It had the features not of peripheral underdevelopment but of semi-peripheral capitalist development (Bratton 1981:459). It had a large pool of skilled manpower, good infrastructure and an advanced commercial agriculture economy. At independence, the country had by far more educated Africans than any other African country, with some 25 000 qualified teachers and thousands of graduates in exile around the world and among the forces in the bush. Raftopoulos (1986:283) estimates that there were between 6 000 and 8 000 Zimbabwean students in overseas universities. While Zambia had just about a dozen black university graduates at independence, in contrast, Zimbabwe boasted 12 000 of them in 1980 (Good 2002:7). In spite of the small population, it was deemed to have probably the most attractive business environment in black Africa north of the Limpopo. Its geographical location made it a potential springboard for western capital seeking markets in southern Africa, a region that held tremendous economic potential.

Something akin to a contagious investment fever was already rousing among Western corporations seeking overseas expansion and export markets. Investors from across the globe attracted by prospects of high profitability, jostled to Zimbabwe to actively assess prospects for profitable investments. A leading New York banker is quoted as saying, “Let’s face it – it’s an oyster. No banker could fail to be interested” (Astrow 1983:164). Turnbull Gibson asked: “Who will be first? With France, West Germany and Japan vying with the UK for Rhodesian business... the question is - who gets there first?” (Astrow 1983:164). The US Department of Commerce described Zimbabwe as “a unique opportunity for American investment in a nation eager for new capital and new technology, with material and human resources to put them to work profitably” (Sylvester 1991:99-100). Ron Aldridge of the Confederation of British Industry argued against sending junior salesmen adding: “This is a highly sophisticated and critical market and therefore I emphasise that in the early stages it must be a senior representative going out at this time” (Astrow 1983:164). With all this interest, it is almost certain that no newly independent African country received as much advice as did Zimbabwe on how it should go about the task of economic development

(Gordon 1984:121). African leaders were also aware of the country's potential: "This is the jewel in Africa's crown. Don't tarnish it," Nyerere reportedly told Mugabe before boarding his flight back home from the independence celebrations (Good 2002:8).

### **7.3.1 Initial successes**

The incoming administration knew that the world's eyes were fixed on the country and given the context within which it was operating and the numerous challenges that stood on the way, it did not disappoint. The economy experienced a boom in the immediate post-colonial period. Real growth in GDP was officially at 14% in 1980 and grew by 8% in 1981 exceeding expectations by far; capital investment rose from 13.7% in 1979 to 17.5% in 1983; capacity utilisation rose from 76% in 1979 to 91% in 1982; and external financing also rose admirably (Southall unpublished, 9). In the first decade of independence, the economy grew on average by more than 4%, compared with only 1% for sub-Saharan Africa as a whole (Riddell, cited in Weiss 1994:146). The lifting of sanctions boosted industry and saw a net improvement in the country's foreign exchange position. Closer ties with the West resulted in a considerable expansion of both imports and exports. Zimbabwe was granted special access to the European Economic Commission (EEC) markets and associate membership of the EEC for a year. This positively affected exports which went up 65% from January 1979, while imports recorded a 45% increase and by the end of 1980, exports had gone up in excess of 30% compared to 1979 (Astrow 1983:165). Agriculture benefitted from a return to production of land abandoned during the war and exceptionally good rains during the 1980 and 1981 farming seasons. In 1980, a bumper maize harvest was recorded, and despite a devastating drought of the 1982-1983 season, Zimbabwe still had enough to feed its people. Productive capabilities of farmers in former TTLs were boosted by distributing farming inputs. The agricultural technical and extension service was expanded to help farmers and the Agricultural Finance Corporation (AFC) was equipped to provide soft loans to communal farmers. These developments saw the communal farming sector increase its share of total marketed agricultural production considerably. The government also established state farms throughout the country intending to transform them into a successful large-scale socialist production. Positive pricing strategies for farmers were designed and marketing depots were built in rural area. As a result of all these efforts, Zimbabwe assumed the role of food security in the Southern African Development Coordinating Conference (SADCC). That earned it the tag of "bread basket of southern Africa".

The land redistribution programme was unparalleled in Africa. In the first five years, 2.5 million hectares of white land were acquired for redistribution (Mumbengegwi 1986:212). There was a lot of evidence that the resettled farmers substantially improved their yields. The British Overseas Development Administration (ODA) praised the programme for making impressive strides towards achieving its principal objectives (Sachikonye 2003:230). The Auditor-General also noted that the programme was well planned, that the landless rural poor had benefited immensely, and that their level of household income and standard of living had improved significantly (Sachikonye 2003:230).

The 1980s saw a dramatic improvement in human development indicators as the country made impressive strides in promoting the welfare of the African majority especially in the fields of health and education. The backlog of ninety years of neglect of black education was immense. By the end of 1979, three quarters of the schools, mostly in rural areas, had been closed or destroyed and half a million young people had missed many years of education. The government embarked on a massive programme of rebuilding schools that had been destroyed by the war and new ones were also built. Enrolment in primary schools shot up from 820 000 in 1979 to 2 216 878 by 1985, while it increased in secondary schools from 66 000 to 482 000 (Mlambo 1997:59). Even with this impressive expansion, the government was struggling to satisfy the appetite for education as more and more learners wanted to go to school.

There were 22 000 teachers in 1980 and the number increased to 83 000 by 1989. Teachers, especially for science subjects and mathematics, were also recruited from western countries. New teacher training colleges were built increasing the enrolment of student teachers from 2 824 in 1980 to 17 665 in 1990 (Mlambo 1997:61). Through bilateral arrangements with Cuba and other countries Zimbabwe sent groups of student teachers to training institutions overseas. Adult literacy programmes were introduced for those who had not had the chance to attend school. Vocational, technical and agricultural colleges were established throughout the country. Apprenticeships were introduced to train artisans in the various trades. Enrolment at the University of Zimbabwe increased from 1 873 students in 1980 to 9 012 in 1990 (Weiss 1994:67). New universities were also built and new degree programmes introduced. Distance learning was introduced for those who could not study on a full time basis. In the ten years, 1980-1990, Zimbabwe had educated more Africans than the colonial governments had throughout the ninety year period of colonial education. According to



Roger Riddell (cited in Weiss 1994:146), the country experienced the most rapid explosion of primary and secondary school places ever recorded in Africa. The Mugabe administration was willing to spend resources on educating its people, spending about a quarter of the total national budget, making it the largest item on the national budget. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1991:58) adds that the share of the budget allocated to primary education rose from 38% to 56%, doubling the real expenditure per learner.

As in education, the country made great strides in expanding health care facilities and making services easily accessible to the African population. Health expenditure shifted from urban to rural areas. Hospital fees for low-income earners and the unemployed, was scrapped. The meagre medical facilities built by the colonial regimes in the rural areas and which had all but collapsed due to the war were repaired while new ones were established. Primary health care facilities were upgraded. The World Bank (WB 1992:x) noted that more than 500 health care centres were built or upgraded, and more than a dozen district hospitals were completed or were under construction. By 1990 most of the country's rural population was within a 10km radius of a health care facility (Makaye and Munhande 2013:66). Auxiliary nurses and Village Health Workers were trained to bring health care closer to people in rural areas (WB 1992:x). The percentage of children fully immunised rose from 25% in 1980 to 86% by 1990 while the proportion of women on contraceptives rose from 14% to 36% (WB 1992:x). Zimbabwe was reputed to have the highest rate of contraceptive use in sub-Saharan Africa by 1990 (Mlambo 1997:161). Life expectancy increased from 55 to 59 years while infant mortality dropped from 82 to 72 per 1 000 births and maternal mortality fell to 90 per 100 000 births (WB 1992:x). The Bank lauded Zimbabwe's achievements in health provision during the 1980s as truly impressive, noting that the indicators were significantly better than the averages for black Africa (WB 1992:x). A supplementary feeding scheme was introduced for children, which, at its peak, 1981-1985, was feeding a quarter of a million children, reducing malnutrition from 29% to 16% between 1980 and 1987. Boreholes and protected wells were sunk to provide clean drinking water to rural communities. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP 1991:58) was impressed by these achievements commenting:

The government's commitment to priority areas has resulted in human expenditures per person greater than those of wealthier countries and accounts for the country's impressive achievements in literacy, child mortality and life expectancy.

Due to neglect of black townships by the colonial governments, there was an acute shortage of housing for the urban poor, with a backlog of about 37 000 units at independence. This shortage manifested itself in overcrowding in the few available houses in black townships and hostels near industrial areas, and the prevalence of squatter settlements around urban areas. With the coming of independence, there was an influx of migrants into urban areas looking for employment opportunities. In 1982, the backlog rose to 62 000 units and was expected to get to 380 000 in a decade (Baker 1984:184). The Ministry of Housing was created to address issues of urban housing. Among other projects, it built low-cost housing units for the urban poor. 103 000 housing units had been built by 1989 (Auret 1990:133). The government also made attempts to clear the squatter settlements. In the case of Epworth, a squatter settlement near Harare with an estimated 50 000 residents in 1983, the government upgraded and developed the area through construction of roads and provision of sanitation.

At independence, the country had one of the largest income disparities in the world. The government enacted the minimum wage policy in July 1980 and adjusted the minimum wage periodically, providing substantial increase in the incomes of black workers. There was also emphasis on improving the workers' living and working conditions. The pace of change was accelerated and Africans took charge at virtually every level of government. The civil service expanded exponentially. Thousands of well-qualified and competent blacks were recruited to take over from whites in the civil service and parastatals. Zimbabwe indeed saw some significant economic and social gains during the first decade of independence. The country was, as a result, internationally acclaimed as a shining example of a developing country committed to the progress of its people. But underneath this thin layer of successes numerous challenges were lurking and most of the achievements were to prove unsustainable sooner rather than later.

### **7.3.2 Challenges to development**

The difficulties that stood in the face of the new government were daunting. To begin with, the relationship between black and white over ninety years had been that of horse and rider. Suddenly, the two were expected to be citizens, living side-by-side on equal terms. Would the whites acknowledge the black government and give it their allegiance? Added to this was the hostility between the military wings of the two guerrilla factions which bordered on outright hostility. Both had also fought the white settler army and now the new government was faced

with the unenviable task of forming an integrated and united national army out of three antagonistic entities. The national economy was in dire straits in 1980. It had been devastated by international economic sanctions after the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) of 1965, and the war of liberation had taken a heavy toll. The destruction of human and natural resources, as well as infrastructure was just too great. The incoming government inherited what most likely had become the most unequal society in the world in which the country enjoyed one of the highest average per capita incomes on the continent, but the majority of its population were among the most impoverished in the world (Mlambo 2017:4). To make matters worse, the economy was dominated by domestic white and foreign capital controlled by white management and white skills. Two-thirds of the small white elite that controlled industry was foreign. No less than 300 foreign-owned companies were operational in the country in 1980 (Clarke 1980:34). The whole social and commercial infrastructure had been designed for a privileged few white settlers. The inherited socio-economic system of Zimbabwe was characterised by social, economic and technological dualism. There were two broad economic sectors: the modern and the peasant. The former was advanced and diversified while the latter was underdeveloped. The challenge was to develop the peasant economy without sacrificing the modern sector, or how to redress these imbalances without negatively affecting productivity.

As in the other sectors of the economy, the Mugabe government also inherited a dualistic structure of land ownership and agricultural production. The 6 000 commercial farmers controlled roughly half of the productive land. 800 000 African families controlled the other half. The best productive land with higher rainfall and better soils was exclusively in white hands. For this reason, the white commercial farmers were strongly entrenched in the economy, accounting for two thirds of total farm production and 90% of marketed output (Skålnes 1995:150). With these figures, a careful balancing act was needed between what was in the interest of the white farmers (what made *economic* sense) and the need for policies that benefitted communal farmers (what made *political* sense). When the resettlement process started, it was the marginal, rather than productive land that was redistributed. The best part of commercial farm land was by and large untouched. A redistribution of prime land for resettlement was difficult to achieve without affecting productivity. Being faithful to the LHA, the government could not compulsorily acquire land for resettlement without the consent of the farmer. The willing-buyer willing-seller arrangement was happening at a snail's pace. Initially resettlement proceeded much faster as government targeted abandoned

and underutilised land reaching its peak in 1982/83, when over one million hectares were acquired (Dashwood 1996:37). But from then on, the programme lost momentum and proceeded very slowly. The abandoned and underutilised land had dried up. By 1989, the government had resettled only 52 000 families on 2 416 312 hectares of land, way below its target of resettling 162 000 families on nine million hectares of land (*The Herald*, 4 August 1989). Meanwhile, the purchase price was sky rocketing. By 1985, it had increased by 48% (Auret 1990:77). The hunger for land made many to invade and settle on white farms as illegal squatters. Manicaland Province alone was estimated to have 90 000 illegal squatters on white farms in 1982 (Libby 1984:148).

There was also the issue of the technical and economic incapacity of the incoming African petit bourgeoisie that was inheriting power to manage a bourgeois state and its capitalist economy, let alone channel the economy towards the desired egalitarianism. The nationalist leadership had very little understanding of the operations of a modern economy. Some had been school teachers, others clerks, while others had never held a proper job before. The majority had never perused a balance sheet all their life and had very little, if any, exposure to either statecraft or business (Mandaza 2007:6). Thus, at independence Mugabe heavily relied on white skills from the Smith regime. Two whites were given charge of two strategic ministries of Industry and Agriculture while Smith's army commander and head of intelligence were retained. The central bank and judiciary was also left in white hands.

All these coupled with a general increase in population made it imperative that a comprehensive reconstruction and reform programme be embarked on. This mammoth task required a lot of resources which the new government did not have. The economy was supposed to grow fast to create jobs and raise the funds for reconstruction. The majority of the blacks who had celebrated the demise of colonialism were expecting a sudden improvement in the quality of their lives. They expected independence to bring qualitative change in their lives that had been dehumanised by the weight of white racist oppression and exploitation. They had been mobilised to support and participate in the war precisely on the basis of this promise. How were these expectations to be met unless government changed the inherited structure of the economy through a radical programme that would give priority to redistribution of assets? No doubt, a backlash would be expected from local and international finance capital. Mugabe opted to follow a non-disruptive reformist strategy of building on its colonial inheritance, seeking to make it more equitable much to the disappointment of the

expectant masses. It is within this context that Mugabe's policy of reconciliation ought to be located.

### **7.3.3 The political economy of reconciliation**

When rumours of Mugabe's victory began circulating on that memorable day of 4 March 1980, there was panic and pandemonium in the white community. Mugabe's crushing victory and the wild celebration of the blacks cast deep fear into the hearts of the white population. It had come as massive shock to a disbelieving white population after years immersed in false propaganda and self-deception. They could see the world collapsing right in front of them. But as it turned out, the fears were unfounded. That Tuesday evening, they listened to Mugabe's victory speech with growing amazement, as in a reconciliatory tone, Mugabe told them to forget the past and invited them to join him in building the country together as citizens. More surprises were to come. On the eve of independence, he told an attentive nation that they now had to relate to each other as equal citizens, bound one to another by a bond of national comradeship and forgive and forget the wrongs of the past (Weiss 1994:5). There was going to be no retributions; no loss of private property; no identification of war criminals; no truth and reconciliation commission and no Nuremberg trials. It was not time to ask who owed what and to whom? A colossal wave of relief swept over the white community. The new Premier went on to form a coalition government which also included ministers from Joshua Nkomo's PF ZAPU. By so doing, white settler capital could be appeased, international finance capital reassured and the tensions with PF ZAPU eased. Mugabe's policy of reconciliation won him hearts and minds at home and abroad. His approval ratings in diplomatic circles soared. He became a darling of the West. White settlers soon realised that fears that their social status would be undermined were baseless. Their privilege and standard of life remained exceptionally high at the same level as it was before independence. Many of those who had fled to South Africa, a country that seemed to embody the political ideals of white dominance, soon realised this and wandered back home now fearful of the imminent demise of apartheid down there (Mandaza 1986:55).

The ZANU PF policy of reconciliation was embedded in the LHA. Having already agreed not to nationalise the means of production and respect property rights at Lancaster House and expecting some financial aid from the former imperialist countries, it was all too obvious that the power elites were going to take the reconciliation route. The Mugabe government was too

eager to reassure imperialist countries that their investments and interests were safe in Zimbabwe. Mandaza (cited in Bond and Manyanya 2003:25) argues that international finance capital was, since the LHA, the major factor in the country's policies, both internal and external. Mandaza (1986:81) adds that reconciliation represents the class fulfilment of those who make it immediately in the new dispensation. The policy should be understood against the background of the African petite bourgeoisie wanting to establish its credentials with the financial world, without which its existence as a class would be in jeopardy. Having succeeded in making it into the corridors of power in the new state after elbowing out the white settler colonial bourgeoisie, the African nationalist petite bourgeois is only too content to forgive as the price it can pay for achieving the class goal after so much deprivation and denial. It is not reconciliation in terms of providing social justice for the majority of the masses. It is rather the forgiveness of a tiny elite that inherits state power. It is the black elite, not the African majority that was reconciled with the whites. Ruth Weiss (1994:146) adds that reconciliation was not between black and white, but between white and a black section: the elite. The policy of reconciliation helped cultivate a black bourgeoisie class which a few years into independence, had more in common with white settlers than with the proletariat. By so doing, left-leaning critics interpreted the policy of reconciliation as petit-bourgeois leadership's abandonment of the proletariat to accommodate finance capital.

Reconciliation was a kind of a ritual through which the African nationalist petit bourgeoisie was initiated into the club of the elite which was hitherto a preserve of the whites. After paying the necessary price (reconciliation), the new elites were accepted as social equals by whites and, as expected, quickly adapted to their lifestyle. The result of the LHA was, in a way, the formation of a joint white and black money elite. The original members of the club (the whites) did not feel any remorse for their past or their privileges; rather the incoming elite was supposed to be grateful for having been granted membership of the club. Whites accepted reconciliation as part of a peace treaty (Weiss 1994:xxii). In their view, all that was needed was to accept a black in place of a white leadership. They would continue with their privileges as before. For the masses in need of improved living conditions, reconciliation was not a stepping-stone. Little wonder elitist reconciliation is neither sustainable nor durable.

As shall be seen later, it gradually became untenable as the demands of the proletariat grew louder, in an economy that was narrow and shallow. Furthermore, as noted in Chapter Six,

the post-colonial African state is a “hostage state” which is weak and dependent. It does not have a national anchor bourgeoisie class which would enable it to withstand the heat from international finance capital and institute a national agenda. Because of this weakness and dependence, radical programmes intended to redress the imbalances of the past cannot be implemented by the post-white settler colonial state, even by one born out of a radical and socialist-oriented national liberation struggle, like ZANU PF. To expect such a state to implement radical policies of its own choice is to ignore its nature and its orientation - it is inherently unable to fulfil these popular demands because it is still under the “colonial power matrix”. It is caught up in an unenviable dilemma between the demands of international finance capital and the socio-economic demands of the masses, and in a tension between reconciliation and social justice. This weakness and dependence will compel it to compromise its socio-economic agenda, including not demanding reparations and compensation for the colonial pain and loss, and therefore takes the reconciliation route. Even with the best will in the world, the African petite bourgeoisie leadership cannot fulfil its war-time promises under this economic order (Mandaza 1986:50). The incoming African nationalist bourgeoisie leadership has very limited, if any, power and freedom to decide on development policy without approval from Washington or London. Michael Bratton (1981:452) questions if the petite bourgeoisie elite has the tactical mobility to pursue policies of its own choosing under such conditions, concluding that the wherewithal to effect a redistribution of wealth is not presently in the hands of the state. The state would, of necessity, continue to reflect white settler colonial interests, and those of all who have similar class and economic interests. It might genuinely have wanted to embark on a radical economic reform programme to correct obvious past imbalances but it knew the severe consequences that would follow. Mugabe himself would be severely disciplined two decades later when he defied the rules of the game to embark on the FTLRP. Thus, at independence, Mugabe had no option but to forgive, thus turning the “post-colonial neo-colonised” Zimbabwe into an era of frustrated dreams and shattered visions.

Furthermore, Mugabe knew that rapid indigenisation would do irreparable damage to the economy. ZANU guerrillas had witnessed the destruction of Mozambique’s economy when the Portuguese, fearing radical Marxist nationalisation and expropriation, deliberately destroyed property and infrastructure before fleeing the country *en masse* with their skills and capital (Weiss 1994:11-12), leaving the country of 12 million people with only 2 engineers, 3

agronomists, 5 veterinary surgeons and 36 doctors (Norman 2004:81). That experience gave Mugabe reason to fear the loss of white capital and skills. Mozambican President, Samora Machel reportedly urged Mugabe to exercise caution, and avoid an exodus of whites (Gordon 1984:132; Norman 2004:81). Machel is quoted as saying: “Don’t play make-believe Marxist games when you get home. You will face ruin if you force the whites into precipitate flight” (Meredith 2005:326). Already, the war of liberation had caused thousands of whites to leave and in 1980 alone, 10% of the whites (17 000 people), left the country (Norman 2004:91). Mugabe knew that thousands more would follow, with devastating consequences for the economy. This, of course, bolstered the ideology of settler colonialism, feeding on the settler belief in the indispensability of white skills, and the assumption that the continued functioning of the economy was tied with white presence. The indispensability of the white factor was seen as the goose that lay the golden eggs which had to be preserved, pampered, and as far as possible, left alone, undisturbed in its historical God-given role (Mandaza 1986:47). Thus, for John Mw Makumbe (1996:48), reconciliation was “practical politics.” Mugabe was prepared to disappoint and sacrifice the expectations of the masses but not upset white monopoly capital. In the end, while the motto during the struggle was “People first”, in the post-white settler era, it became “Capital first.” Thus the Zimbabwean state became the guarantor of capitalist production.

It is against this background that the African nationalist petite bourgeoisie policy of reconciliation should be understood. A weak bourgeoisie which had attained its class goal of taking over state power, in an equally weak and hostage state, whose birth had been mediated by the midwife of imperialism, had to pay a bit of a price to the white settler bourgeoisie and behave itself by listening to the dictates of the imperialist powers. It had to allay imperialist fears abroad and dissuade the forgiven white settler bourgeoisie from an exodus and sabotage acts that would upset an already fragile economy. But where did all this leave the much taunted Marxism-Leninism, or better sounding scientific socialism?



### 7.3.4 A Marxist revolution that lost the fire

ZANU officially adopted Marxism-Leninism as its ideology in 1977. It aimed to achieve a socialist revolution in the new era. Mugabe was feared as a no-nonsense Marxist guerrilla who intended to implement wholesale nationalisation of the means of production in the post-white settler Zimbabwe. The masses were mobilised on the promises of a socialist future. However, his moderation at independence surprised many. In particular, many were shocked by his rapid transformation overnight from a feared hard-core Marxist guerrilla to a “respectable” politician of capitalist persuasion. After the first decade of independence, the party announced that it was abandoning the ideology.

Mandaza (1986:30) argues strongly that there was no need to be surprised because, contrary to ZANU claims, the armed struggle did *not* have a socialist thrust at all (emphasis added). He adds that the claim is contradicted not only by the serious ideological emptiness of the nationalist movement but also by its limited capacity when dealing with the white settler and imperialist scheming at Lancaster House (Mandaza 1986:30). The nationalists made very serious concessions to imperialism which would have been unthinkable had it been seriously intending to embark on a socialist revolution. A socialist thrust would have required a clearly articulated ideology that would fully explain the historical reality of imperialism; reveal the class structure of the liberation movement itself; and constitute the basis for a vanguard party that would in turn guide and translate the political gains of political independence into a movement towards socialist construction (Mandaza 1986:30). It would also have required an acceptance that the peasants and workers were the vanguard of the processes of transformation, and then seek to conscientise and mobilise them to achieve the desired socialist goal (Mandaza 1986:30). Except for the communist style jargon such as “comrade”, “politburo”, “central committee” and “First Secretary” that ZANU PF has retained, the party was a far cry from the Leninist party model in both form and content (Mandaza 2007:10). For Mandaza (2007:10), the Leninist party model is, in essence,

a unit of social organisation, a political framework founded on a strong proletarian ideology in which the interests and aspirations of the working people are paramount, and buttressed by structures that project the party as one with a formidable intellectual and organisational content.

ZANU PF, by contrast, seems to have neglected the interests of the proletariat as it sought to appease international finance capital. In reality, “political and economic nationalism” characterised the policies of ZANU PF better than Marxist-Leninism (Skålnes 1995:75).

What we have with the ZANU-led struggle is a nationalist armed struggle intended to replace the settler colonial system with an African government. Peter P. Ekeh (1975:102) had argued that the struggle for independence in Africa was nothing more than “a struggle for power between the two bourgeois classes involved in the colonisation of Africa,” namely the entrenched white colonial bourgeois and the emerging black bourgeois. It was not a question of differences of principles or any other lofty ideal, but rather a question of which of the two bourgeois classes should rule. Likewise independence simply meant the assumption of state power by the African elite. Mandaza (2007:3) concurs, adding that the *raison d'être* - and practically an end in itself - of the African nationalists was seeking to take over literally from the white settler bourgeoisie. Its agenda and ideology had no loftier aim than simply stepping into the shoes of the coloniser by inheriting state power and the bourgeois capitalist economy. The central goal of the armed struggle was therefore national independence, not the establishment of a socialist state. According to Ian Phimister (1978:52), the alliance of rural class forces behind the guerrilla struggle was united in opposition to colonialism but nothing more. There was no shared vision of the future beyond the recovery of land “stolen” by whites (Phimister 1978:52). It was more a reaction to white settler racism and disenfranchisement than a well-thought out and clearly articulated socio-political and economic vision of the future society. It hardly encompassed within it even the slightest idea of a socialist revolution (Mandaza 1986:29). Despite its militant Marxist rhetoric, ZANU’s political programme had nothing to offer the masses except a continued period of capitalist development. Its political programme did not advance the interests of the proletariat but those of monopoly capital. Of course this was in the vain hope that the majority of the previously disenfranchised African people would somehow benefit in the process

Mandaza (1986:23) sees African nationalism as an expression of class interests, but only appears to conceal the aspirations of the various factions within the African petite bourgeoisie class. Andre Astrow (1983:136) also sees the same class interests at play, arguing that the aim of the petite bourgeois leadership of the nationalist movement was not to overthrow capitalist relations of production as such, but to remove the discriminatory structures of settler society preventing its advancement as a class. This, in essence, was not a challenge to

capitalism at all, but a challenge only to white privilege. The struggle was waged, not on an anti-capitalist pro-socialist basis, but evidently with the aim of democratising the racist structures of white settler society that prevented its admission into the elite bourgeoisie club. The nationalist desire to democratise Rhodesian capitalism and to reconstitute it with an African face and support base, stemmed from the class interests of its leadership (Astrow 1983:136). The African nationalist petite bourgeoisie was competing with the white settler colonial bourgeoisie for political and economic power but not necessarily to challenge the unequal and exploitative structures of Rhodesian society. It was the Smith government's arrogance, intransigence and refusal to grant any concessions that led to disillusionment and frustration on the part of the otherwise non-violent African nationalists and to the decision to finally embrace the armed struggle as the only way to realise their class interests. The petite bourgeois leadership of the nationalists saw the war as a means of speeding up political, not social, change (Astrow 1983:137). The contention of the African nationalist petite bourgeoisie that the struggle for liberation was anti-imperialist, therefore, flies in the face of all available evidence. They radicalised and demanded a buy-in from the African masses for their class project with a Marxist-Leninist rhetoric while at the same time embracing petite bourgeoisie politics. It was necessary to bring the masses on board and entice them through socialist rhetoric and promises so that they own the struggle, thus conceal its class dynamics. The peasants courageously waged a war under the impression that it was for their liberation. Little did they know that they were merely assisting the bourgeoisie class attain its class goal.

That a socialist revolution was not going to happen in Zimbabwe was evident from the *very serious and calculated* pro-capital approach of the Mugabe government. The ruling elite did all it could to gain the support of Western imperialist countries and establish conditions conducive for rapid capitalist development (Astrow 1983:5). Left-leaning critics argued that behind the socialist rhetoric and framework of the government development strategies lay a programmatic approach that was reinforcing capitalism and limiting the capacity of government to achieve its stated goal of socialist transformation (Gordon 1984:140). According to Bond (1998, 2005) what we have in the immediate post-independence era is a classic case of "indicating left, turning right". Mugabe went out of his way to reassure foreign companies that their investments and interests in Zimbabwe were safe and secure. He worked hard to promote rapid capitalist development to ensure that the country became a stable destination for foreign investment. Ties with the capitalist countries were strengthened. But

surprisingly (or not) while the ZANU PF officials were flying all over the Western world entering into trade agreements, there was no enthusiasm to boost ties with the Eastern (communist) bloc. When the government organised the Zimbabwe Conference on Reconstruction and Development (ZIMCORD), participants came from 45 mainly Western capitalist countries and international donor agencies. From the socialist bloc, only China and Yugoslavia were represented. A number of East European countries were not even invited to the independence celebrations. The Soviet Union was accused of sowing discord by continuing to support PF ZAPU, which they had supported during the war. When it wanted to establish an embassy in Harare, the Soviet Union was told outright that it had to support ZANU PF first. In fact, according to the *International Herald Tribune* (25 August 1980), Mugabe admitted that the war-time radical Marxist rhetoric was just part of a war-time propaganda campaign, designed to increase the morale of the guerrillas and the masses and put pressure on the settler regime. He was right.

Furthermore, the first two post-independence budget speeches were in line with the overall aim of creating conditions necessary for the growth and stability of capitalism. *The Financial Mail* (2 January 1981) observed: “The first ZANU PF budget of July 1980 was virtually indistinguishable from previous budgets presented by the Rhodesian Front Ministers in the 1970s.” It is also this calculated pro-capitalist turn that made Mugabe agree to pay the inherited debt estimated at US\$700 million (Bond and Manyanya 2003:15). The debt should have been repudiated or the ZANU PF government could have defaulted on what Bond and Manyanya (2003:15) call “odious debt” because the black Zimbabwean tax payers had to pay twice for this debt; first, when loans were taken to oppress them and second, when the lenders demanded their money back. When Britain imposed sanctions on Rhodesia after UDI, Smith had responded by defaulting on over Z\$82 million in foreign debt (Bond and Manyanya 2003:15). Instead, not wanting to upset his new-found Western imperialist friends, Mugabe decided to repay the repulsive debt.

Probably a question that needs to be asked is why the ZANU PF government kept on chanting its socialist rhetoric right into the second decade of independence, when it was clear that it was not taking that route? Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:302) suggests that it is due to the unique ideological terrain into which Zimbabwe was born in 1980. The young state stood astride uneasily the fading socialist world that had not yet entirely faded, and the emerging neo-liberal world that had not yet become triumphant (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:302). The

young state was, therefore, forced to think and dream in both socialist and liberal terms, thus its political ideology was captive to the two antagonistic worlds. The emerging world was more doable in the here and now than the fading world. It should also be noted that ZANU received military and ideological support from communist China. Thus, the socialist bloc had a lasting impression on the party to the extent that its political organisation was carved on the eastern bloc template, complete with a central committee and politburo (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:306). This is why it continued to sing from the Marxist-Leninist hymnbook even when it became clear that it was no longer possible to implement socialism.

The argument that socialism did not take root, against the wishes of the ZANU PF government, because of the restrictive clauses of the LHA, etc. is untenable. Here is a deliberate attempt by the African petite bourgeoisie leadership that had attained its class goal, to align itself with Western capital for its class interests and self-preservation. The right turn was thus not an accident of history. Lenin (cited in Astrow 1983:213) had warned that the petite bourgeois, while purporting to support the struggle against imperialism, instead degrades it by making a deal that will assure its own position at the expense of the masses. Marx and Engels (1986:269-270) likewise observed:

Far from desiring to transform the whole society for the revolutionary proletarians, the democratic petty bourgeoisie strives for a change in social conditions by means of which the existing society will be made as tolerable and comfortable as possible for them.

But while international finance capital was courted, reassured and impressed, little had changed for the African masses. The struggle of the blacks for socialism had been abandoned in favour of the development of capitalism. Zimbabwe was now securely positioned in the Western camp. The state was now a committed servant of international finance capital. Not only had it failed to (rather could not) promote socialism, but had, on the contrary, worked extra hard to strengthen its ties with imperialism, thus entrenching capitalism in Zimbabwe. Labour relations were also to mirror this entrenching of capitalism.

### 7.3.5 Workers under siege

To the ZANU PF petite bourgeoisie government, the working class was a potential threat to capitalist stability and thus to its continued existence and prosperity as a class. The post-white settler colonial petite bourgeois, by its nature, seeks to crush any mass movement which poses a threat to its enjoyment of the fruits of independence. To the African petite bourgeoisie, the role of the working class in the new dispensation was that of an effective producer. The producers were to be organised to increase their efficiency and thus the profitability of capitalism. To the disappointment of an expectant working class, Labour Minister Kumbirai Kangai's message was: "If anything, Zimbabweans must work harder and longer hours than before" (Astrow 1983:175). Maurice Nyagumbo, Minister of Mines, put it more bluntly: "We never promised instant pay increases. We said the only way to get results was by working hard" (Astrow 1983:175). True to that line of thought, when a series of wildcat strikes broke out throughout the country in 1980 as workers tried to cash in on the promises made during the war, the ZANU PF government took exception to the strikes. Thousands were fired. Peter Makaye and Constantine Munhande (2013:65) note that between March 1980 and June 1981, there were a total of 177 recorded strikes. With the aim of organising, and therefore neutralising, the workers, Minister Kangai formed the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) in February 1982, led by the Premier's brother, Abel. ZCTU leadership immediately stated that it would cooperate with the government. One of its officials said:

We should all work together to boost the economy...We cannot do this by striking. Each time we down our tools, we are ruining the economy of our country (Astrow 1983:178).

The government could always rely on the support of the labour federation in the maintenance of stable industrial relations. This is why ZCTU could not be relied on to articulate workers' demands. Workers who went on strike were described as counter-revolutionary elements bent on undermining the people's government. Kangai called on workers to stop "sabotaging Zimbabwe's newly-won freedom" (Astrow 1983:178). His deputy, Robson Manyika, referred to strikers as "agitators opposed to ZANU PF who are instigating these strikes" (Astrow 1983:178). On his part, the Prime Minister referred to strikers as "dissident elements bent on discrediting the government" (Astrow 1983:179). In his view, law and order were central to

achieving the objective of his government (read of the development of capitalism). The state often used violence and repression, reminiscent of the white settler state, to bring strikes to an end. Smith's draconian laws, which were still in the statute books, were used with ease to clamp down on protestors. Prioritising capitalist development justified the colonial slave-like wages that were way below the poverty datum line. In Mugabe's own words, "To push wages too high at this stage, before Zimbabwe's economic recovery has barely begun could place recovery in jeopardy" (Astrow 1983:180). That way the post-colonial neo-colonised Zimbabwean state was a mediator between labour and capital, siding with the latter and not hesitating to use the former coloniser's instruments of repression, in denial of workers' democratic rights and fruits of their labour. The Mugabe government was prepared to sacrifice workers' rights and demands at the altar of capitalist development.

### **7.3.6 Challenges of nation-building**

In 1980, the two racial groups that had lived uneasily under the same roof for close to a century on the white man's terms and had faced each other during the war, smoked the peace pipe, hugged and kissed, and tried to find one another afresh. Whites were not asked to pack and go but to remain and participate in the process of nation-building. Those with their own fears left. Between 1980 and 1990, half of the white population left the country (Weiss 1994:49). The reconciled parties continued to live together but suspicions of each other's intentions were rife. Within the black community, there were tensions between the two guerrilla factions that date back to the split of ZAPU in 1963. By the 1980s, the two had become regionally-based and tribal parties. Inevitably, the tensions between the two spilled into the post-independence era. As a result, in February 1982, Mugabe dismissed Nkomo and his PF ZAPU colleagues from government accusing them of plotting to overthrow his government effectively ending the coalition government. This was followed by the disturbances in the predominantly Ndebele-speaking Matabeleland and Midlands regions that have come to be known as *Gukurahundi*, during which conservative estimates put the number of civilian deaths at 20 000 (CCJP and LRC<sup>1</sup>, 1997).

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<sup>1</sup> Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace; Legal Resources Centre

This sad episode in the history of the young nation highlights serious challenges of nation-building in a plural multi-ethnic and multi-racial post-white settler colonial state. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013:189) argues that Zimbabwe has been constantly haunted by the question of how to transform its various ethnicities into one nation and the former natives and settlers into a common citizenship. Masipula Sithole (cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013:70-71) notes that throughout the liberation struggle not a single nationalist political formation escaped from the ghost of ethnicity that constantly threatened to tear the parties to pieces. These various ethnic identities did not have common prehistoric roots that could bind them together. This is contrary to the dominant nationalist view that views Zimbabweans as a people who existed as a collective before colonialism and once colonialism disappeared, Zimbabweans would emerge automatically. He adds that the official 1980s rhetoric of reconciliation (of races) and unity (of ethnicities) were minimalist, inadequate and even problematic in a society characterised by unresolved economic inequalities and irrepressible ethnic tensions (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:71).

Mandaza (1999:82) notes that reconciliation, as strategy of nation-building, is often confined to white-black relations, to the exclusion of black-black relations. Differences between the former colonial masters and the incoming African elites are more easily resolved than is the case between the African petite bourgeoisie leaders. As a result, a serious threat to the nation-building project in the post-white settler colonial state was not posed by the defeated settlers but by factions within the victorious nationalist movement itself. The racial nature of the struggle for independence had concealed the other dimensions, most notably, the ethnic one. Once the racial conflict was overcome, the ethnic problems were bound to come to the surface. Competition and rivalry in the African nationalist petite bourgeois is imminent as each faction positions itself for the “fruits of independence,” in the name of tribe, region or ethnic grouping (Mandaza, 1986:23). He goes on to argue that since the fruits of independence and economic capacity of the post-white settler colonial state are naturally limited, factionalism and rivalry among the African petite bourgeois can become so severe as to threaten not only national unity but even the post-colonial state itself (Mandaza 1986:23). This is what happened with *Gukurahundi*. Thus, due to the capitalist nature of the socio-economic landscape in which it develops, African nationalism is at odds with its stated aim of nation-building and national unity, but is prone to divisiveness and rivalry within the ranks of the African petite bourgeoisie.



The African nationalist petite bourgeoisie inherited the Zimbabwean *state* without the Zimbabwean *nation* (Masunungure 2006:3). With the end of racial segregation in 1980, the new government did not show any systematic commitment to nation-building apart from the superficial policy of reconciliation, without justice, aimed at hailing the small but powerful white community, and the rhetoric of unity aimed at inviting ethnicities into the nation. Rather, the jubilant ZANU PF leadership sought to further strengthen the inherited state before they invented the nation. Like most African leaders, the ZANU PF government proved to be good state-builders but poor nation-builders (Masunungure 2006:3). A state was created without a stable nation. Masunungure (2006:7) maintains that the Zimbabwean state-building project proceeded as if the nation already existed, without being anchored on national sentiment, identity, or consciousness. The result is that the Zimbabwean state became a reality while the Zimbabwean nation remained a fiction (Masunungure 2006:7). Zimbabwe developed a functional state without a functional nation.

Furthermore, the granting of political and social rights to the previously disenfranchised black majority was not accompanied by granting of economic rights in the form of access to national resources like the land, mines and factories. This is why the issue of control over and access to the land continued to shape and influence post-white settler colonial political contestations and imaginations of freedom of the nation decades into independence (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:195). The “cheap” reconciliation of 1980 was reconciliation on the surface. It did not assist in the process of nation-building because it was reconciliation without justice. Reconciliation is only possible between equals. Restitution should have gone hand-in-hand with reconciliation.

Instead of resolving differences and bringing together these diverse identities and opinions, *Gukurahundi* and related intolerances sought to eliminate them. Having failed in its use of a military solution to a political problem, as seen in PF ZAPU victory in Matabeleland in the 1985 elections, ZANU PF sought a political solution to that political problem, resulting in the Unity Accord of December 1987. The petite bourgeoisie in ZANU PF thought they had achieved their aim. In their mind, the nation was now united. But that was not going to be. The Unity Accord, argues Masunungure (2006:6), was a unipolar solution to a multi-polar problem and as such, there was a misalignment between the nature of the problem and the nature of the solution. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:48) suggests, *Gukurahundi* violence provoked radical Ndebele nationalism and politics that sometimes contested the whole idea of a united Zimbabwe state. To the Ndebele, the supposed united nation is a fiction, a figment of

Shona imagination. Later, from the 2000 elections onwards, ZANU PF would be completely rejected by the people of Matabeleland in national elections. Radical Ndebele pressure groups have been formed with most of them virtually distancing themselves from the idea of a united Zimbabwe. Others have been cessationist, demanding a separate Ndebele state. Reconciliation between white and black would later crumble when “unrepentant” whites became the target of attack by ZANU PF as intending to recolonise Zimbabwe; and they would be dispossessed of their land in a violent way during the so-called Third *Chimurenga*, silencing them most probably forever.

### **7.3.7 One-party state as nation-building**

Alongside the desire to establish a Marxist-Leninist state, the ZANU PF government also wanted to establish a *de jure* one-party state. However, while Mugabe was advocating a one-party state, other countries in the region that had been trying to implement it, Mozambique and Zambia, were abandoning the idea. For ZANU PF, it was necessary for Zimbabweans to transcend tribal, ethnic, and local identifications if a truly national consciousness was to emerge (Shaw 1986:380). Unity was necessary if the nation was to be built out of racially and ethnically divided communities. The one-party system would provide Zimbabwe with the unity that the fragile young nation needed. A multi-party system was a luxury that the young state could ill afford for it involved “opposition for the sake of opposition”, as well as “useless quibbling”. Unity meant the country being under the one party, ZANU PF, the party that brought independence. ZANU PF and it alone, carried that mantle. The party and its elite were the true and only representatives of the interests of the people (van Vuuren, 2005:8). The vanguard party was to control all the economic, political and social institutions and organisations of the state to facilitate a single approach to building a socialist system (South African Institute of International Affairs [SAIIA] 1986:2). National unity was the precondition for the establishment of socialism.

Despite initial acceptance of diversity at independence, Mugabe gradually became critical of multi-party democracy. At independence it was not possible to establish one-party rule because of the constitutionally reserved twenty white seats and also because of the decision of his party to compete for elections independent of PF ZAPU. There was also a provision in the Bill of Rights that guaranteed freedom of assembly and association, in particular the right to form, or belong to opposition political parties. PF ZAPU and other parties vehemently

opposed the idea of a one-party state. But Mugabe declared several times that he was suspicious of people who did not wish to join ZANU-PF, the party that was responsible for their freedom. Before the constitutional provision could expire, Mugabe prepared ground for the one-party state by harassing and terrorising the opposition into submission, preferring their voluntary merger with ZANU PF. The brutality of *Gukurahundi* was intended to crush political dissent rather than an ethnic-cleansing exercise (Phimister 2008:210).

Critics viewed Mugabe's drive towards a one-party state as an attempt to consolidate his power. They argued that Mugabe had become obsessed with power. One critic noted that recent African history had shown that the nationalism produced by one-party states "regresses into national self-glorification, illusory ideological mongering, paranoid attacks and shibboleths directed at external and internal enemies" (Shaw 1986:380). Opposition to the system was also heard from his own ranks. Edgar Tekere, a senior member of his cabinet and the party's Secretary General, criticised the idea of creating a one-party state by legislation. Instead of a *de jure* one party state and outlawing rival parties, he favoured a *de facto* one-party state through winning all parliamentary seats. He argued that party members who were behind the rush towards one-party rule were doing so to protect their positions and by so doing were hijacking the revolution (Shaw 1986:391-392). Tekere became even blunt arguing that Mugabe was protecting "insider offenders" (Sylvester 1991:86).

As with the 1980 elections, PF ZAPU captured all the seats in Matabeleland in 1985. That frustrated ZANU's desire for one-party rule. But tired of Mugabe's harassment, Nkomo signed an agreement with Mugabe, effectively making the country a one-party state. With the merger of ZANU PF and PF ZAPU, Mugabe had effectively eliminated the only viable opposition that had remained, and according to Makumbe (2003:35), that had severe consequences for the development of democracy in Zimbabwe. The united ZANU PF decided to put the matter of a one-party state to a referendum in the March 1990 elections. However, that was not to be. Tekere was expelled from ZANU PF in 1988 and formed the Zimbabwe Unity Movement (ZUM) in 1989 which became a rallying point for disaffected party members, intellectuals and middle class outside the party. He contested the 1990 elections winning 17% of the vote, a remarkable achievement for a party formed just months before the elections and whose campaign was subjected to massive violence and intimidation. By so doing, Tekere succeeded in depriving Mugabe a clear mandate to introduce a *de jure* one-party state. Tekere's challenge to Mugabe broke the myth of invincibility and according

to Sithole (1993:38-39), this is the contribution which Tekere made at a critical hour in the country's political development, when it faced the real possibility of a one-party state. An important observation to note is that the spoilt votes were 6% of the total poll, a very large percentage, which seemed to suggest that disillusionment with the ruling party was fast creeping in. Some analysts called it a "protest vote". In September of the same year, Mugabe announced that he had officially abandoned his desire to transform Zimbabwe into a *de jure* one-party state. Even then, the party still continued to maintain effective monopoly of the political space and barely tolerated open political contestation. Thus while the country was never a *de jure* one-party state, it was a *de facto* one-party state.

### **7.3.8 Authoritarianism and consolidation of power**

An important characteristic of the first decade of independence is the consolidation and centralisation of state power. The Marxist-Leninist ideology, the call for a one-party state system, intolerance of dissent, as well as the reconciliation policy and the unity gospel, were part of a broader scheme of power consolidation by the ruling ZANU PF petite bourgeoisie. Consolidation of power went hand-in-hand with authoritarian tendencies. At independence, the party was concerned more about inventing ways of retaining power. Any form of dissent from government policy was not tolerated. Mugabe appointed trusted party cadres, who would be loyal to him, to key public service positions. Party deployees who were inexperienced and inefficient, replaced able and experienced managers. The appointees held the job, the salaries, the perks, but not the responsibilities (Weiss 1994:165). Competence at this stage was not important; ideology, a party card and acceptable tribal background were. The security of the regime was privileged over the opening up of democratic spaces and everything else. In crafting its vision of a post-colonial Zimbabwe, the African nationalist petite bourgeoisie paid no attention to issues of individual and civic rights. They were too concerned with the transfer of power rather than with the conditions in which that power would be exercised (Kagoro 2003:10).

The nationalist leadership had frequently condemned Rhodesia's institutions and instruments of repression, as well as security measures and their practical application in the 1960s and 70s. Furthermore, opposition to this repressive apparatus was one of the driving forces of the guerrilla war. In its *Declaration of Policy* of August 21 1963, ZANU stated that it would repeal all repressive laws enacted by successive white minority governments (Weitzer

1984:82). When it came to power, the new government was widely expected to dismantle this repressive behemoth. However, ZANU PF retained most of it, ready for use against political opponents whenever the regime saw fit. Instead of a sweeping replacement of these measures, Ronald Weitzer (1984:82) sees “a striking continuity between past and present security patterns”. The Central Intelligence Organisation (CIO), which had been formed by Smith and had become notorious for its lack of accountability, was carried over into the new era with the same *modus operandi*. The state of emergency, which Smith had used religiously since 1965, was renewed biannually after 1980, even for areas that were not related to security. The Law and Order (Maintenance) Act (LOMA) of 1960, Smith’s favourite and the most repressive piece of legislation, was also retained as the new state’s paramount security statute. When the state of emergency was finally lifted ten years into independence, the LOMA was not. The same justifications used by the colonial regimes for such measures were now being used by the new government. In this regard, at independence, Zimbabwe was born as a successor to the Rhodesian state rather than as an alternative to it (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:302).

Like the Smith government before it, the new regime aimed at near-total political control and aggressively silenced dissent. Mugabe and his party used coercion and co-option to ensure complete dominance. The harassment, torture and killings of the opposition and the burning of their houses and property that began with the 1980 elections became a key feature of elections thereafter. People were being forced by party youths to attend party events and meetings. The gospel of unity was used to destroy any pluralism within the body politic. The continued existence and flourishing of PF ZAPU (at least in Matabeleland) did not sit well with ZANU PF. Through *Gukurahundi*, ZANU PF demonstrated to the Ndebele supporters of PF ZAPU who really was in power. A whole army brigade - 5th Brigade - trained by the socialist North Korea, was deployed to Matabeleland to fight “dissidents”. Trained for absolute loyalty, it operated outside the normal military hierarchy, and answered directly to the Premier. Under Colonel Perence Shiri, the 5th Brigade committed crimes against humanity of the mould of General Augusto Pinochet and Slobodan Milosevic (Raftopoulos and Phimister, p. 10). Targeting only civilians, the brigade was responsible for mass murders, public executions, rape, torture and property burnings. The Unity Accord which resulted in the merger of the two parties into the united ZANU PF was viewed by analysts as a move by Mugabe to consolidate his power and facilitate the formation of a one-party state (Makumbe, 2003:35). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2008:48) describes the Unity Accord as a “surrender document”

and a moment in which PF ZAPU threw in the towel and was swallowed by ZANU PF. With Nkomo in his armpits, Mugabe moved over to the whites.

The promise for the return of the land “stolen” by whites was a major motivation factor for the support of the war effort by the peasants. Yet, the promise was not being fulfilled as fast as they had expected. The demand for land became pronounced as many rural folk moved on to white farms as squatters. As expected, the government saw them as a threat to stability and capitalist development albeit on the heavily underutilised farms. By mobilising themselves and invading white farms independent of the party structures, the peasants were becoming an alternative centre of power. Police were heavy-handed when called to evict the squatters. In creating conditions for the flourishing of capitalism, democracy became a luxury that the petit bourgeoisie-led state could not afford, at least for now. Capitalist exploitation went hand in glove with the denial of fundamental rights to the African masses. By definition, imperialism requires the oppression and subjugation of the masses. This is why the so-called “national democratic revolution” that the petit bourgeois so often proclaimed as their goal could not materialise. What the undemocratic “democratic revolution” actually did was to force the working class and peasants to subordinate their interests to that of a generally unattainable democracy under the hegemony of the petit bourgeois and by so doing, condemn them to the ruthless oppression necessary for the survival and flourishing of capitalism (Astrow 1983:214).

After his much praised policy of reconciliation, Mugabe expected the whites to vote for ZANU PF in the 1985 election. But when they did not, he was upset. He felt betrayed by the people he had forgiven. He denounced them accusing them of not accepting his government's generous offer of reconciliation, and so did not deserve any special consideration in the future (Sylvester 1991:80). When the constitutional provision that guaranteed white reserved parliamentary seats expired, Mugabe quickly abolished them effectively neutralising the whites and removing them from the political arena. Furthermore, the electoral system that ZANU PF adopted when it came to power was also indicative of its power consolidation intentions. Proportional representation was used for the 1979 internal settlement and the 1980 independence elections. Advocates of this system, among whom were Rhodesian whites reasoned that in a plural society such as Zimbabwe, the system prevents one group from monopolising power and was therefore more conducive for democratic representation. Many analysts on the continent have also preferred proportional representation to the Single

Member District (SDM) or first-past-the-post, winner takes-all system on the ground that it is more democratic and is most suitable for societies in the process of developing a democratic culture (Moyo 1992:156-162). They argue that it is quite effective in managing and accommodating ethnic, racial, ideological, religious, and other cleavages in African plural societies. At Lancaster House, the nationalist formations indicated that they were going to amend the Electoral Act to do away with proportional representation and introduce the SDM system (Sithole and Makumbe 1997:124). They felt uneasy with a democratic system, accusing it of being a ploy employed by whites to prevent a clear electoral victory by African nationalists. ZANU PF wanted an absolute majority which proportional representation would not give. The Electoral Act was amended and all elections after 1985 were held under the SDM system.

An authoritarian culture was reinforced by the party's emphasis on unity at all costs. All citizens and organisations were to be of one mind and one heart. There was to be one centre of power. The various systems of the national life were to pull from that centre. Trade unions, churches, civil society and all other organisations had to be subordinated to the party's requirements. All these organisations aligned themselves to the state's developmentalist discourse and the message of national unity (Zamponi 2005:33). Mention has already been made of how the ZCTU was created by the regime, to neutralise the potentially powerful working class and prevent it from pulling in a different direction. Union strategies and tactics were controlled from the ruling party, for the greater part of the 1980s. In the public service, no unions were allowed. Any institution that would provide another centre of power or that would not toe the party line was to be dismantled. Traditional chiefs who, according to the party, had been "unwitting local agents of colonialism," were relegated to the sidelines (Ranger 2001:47). Their political and judicial powers were revoked, leaving them to play purely cultural and religious roles (Ranger 2001:45). In their place Ward and Village development committees (Wadcos and Vidcos), which, in reality were organs of the party, were established in rural areas. These came to be viewed as undemocratic and unrepresentative manifestations of vested ruling party and class interests (Ranger 2001:47).

Thus in the first decade of independence, Zimbabwe was a developmentalist state that worked overtime to facilitate the development and entrenchment of capitalism. The decade was also one of power consolidation by the ruling ZANU PF at the expense of nation-building and democratisation. There is a marked continuity with the colonial settler regimes.

The ZANU PF leadership failed to transform the inherited repressive colonial state into a democratic institution. Likewise, it failed to transform itself into a democratic government that would deliver the promise of freedom. The regime was less interested in democracy than in retention of power. Dissent was not tolerated. The authority of the heroes of the war of liberation was not to be questioned. The 1980s ended with economic problems on the increase, a labour movement maturing in organisational capacity and mobilisational skills - thus an opposition movement in the embryonic stage - and signs of profound damage to the notion of national unity imposed by ZANU-PF, while the land question remained suspended (Zamponi 2005:34). Before moving on to the second decade of independence, it is important to briefly look at a very important aspect of ZANU PF rule which became its key strategy of doing politics - violence - which has thus far been mentioned in passing.

### **7.3.9 Anatomy of ZANU PF violence**

Since 1980, coercion and violence have played an important part in ZANU PF's political strategy. Scholars have since noted that this violence, which has become a key feature of the Zimbabwean political economy, ought to be traced to the very nature of colonial rule which was extremely authoritarian and violent, and to how the liberation war was executed (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009; Kaulemu 2004; Sithole and Makumbe 1997). The colonialists never pretended for a second that they were democratic and non-violent. Violence was their *modus operandi* in dealing with any form of dissent to their racist project. Their extreme violence and authoritarianism provoked the violence of the African nationalists and went on to reproduce itself within the nationalist movement. Likewise, the Second *Chimurenga* was a period when "militarists, sadists, and war mongers, as well as prophets of violence" emerged and "soaked up authoritarian, militaristic and violent tendencies" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:86). Under the shadow of fighting a just war, violence entered into their DNA and they internalised it. Violence became a culture; it became part and parcel of their language and their way of life. As Norma J. Kriger (1992) has pointed out, coercion was a key mobilising strategy of the guerrillas in the rural areas. Support of the war and of the leadership imposed by "the boys in the bush" was not optional. Like the white settler colonial state, the nationalist movement was highly intolerant of pluralism and dissent, and alternative views on how to respond to the colonial system and how to wage the struggle were not entertained. Disagreements of any sort could easily lead to death.



Their operations and management style were authoritarian and commandist. Notions of puppet, counter-revolutionary and sell-out were used to weed out differences of opinion. In dealing with these, violence was justified and even celebrated. If possible they had to be eliminated. Furthermore, the influence of the one party-state systems of the Eastern bloc and the adoption of the Marxist-Leninist ideology, with its democratic centralism, also reinforced the lack of tolerance of pluralism. The ZANU elites also made utterance that seemed to glorify violence and even seeing it as the guarantor of people's freedom in the new dispensation. Speaking on Radio from Mozambique, Mugabe said, "The gun which produces the vote should remain its security officer - its guarantor. The people's votes and the people's guns are always inseparable twins (Meredith 2005:627).

This culture of violence had an enduring impression on the African nationalist petit bourgeoisie that came to power in 1980 and consequently on the nature of the state that it created. With all this baggage, it was quite predictable that ZANU PF would have difficulties exorcising the ghost of its war-time violence and authoritarianism when it came to power. The power elite emerged from the crucible of a violent war and so its political strategies and tactics cannot be understood apart from this heritage (Bratton 2014:2). Sithole and Makumbe (1997:134) are not far from the truth in arguing that the fate of the opposition was decided during the guerrilla war. Thus Zimbabwe was "born with a very bad birthmark" that has negatively impacted on the nation-building project (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:191). David Kaulemu (2004:81) has noted that "violence breeds violence and victims of violence become violent themselves." At independence, the former guerrilla movement failed to transform itself into a non-violent democratic political party. As Makumbe (2003:33) observes, "the guerrillas have still not taken off their uniforms; they have not yet laid down their guns." Rather, the new elites retained and even perfected the salient features of the repressive colonial system. Instead of being condemned as anathema to the new political dispensation, violence was "canonised and celebrated" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:191). Party elites have boasted of the party's violent history. Nathan Shamuyarira boasted that the party has "a very strong, long and successful history" of violence, while Mugabe himself boasted of having "degrees in violence." Moreover, ruling party electoral candidates have always reminded rural constituencies that the war would start again should the party of liberation lose an election. For Makumbe (2003:39) it is easy for liberation movements to fall back on their wartime tactics once they feel their power threatened. Bratton (2014:73) adds that when

confronting existential threats, leaders tend to govern by the methods they first used to ascend to power. This explains why the new power elites have constantly resorted to the oppressors' instruments of choice and why the violence and authoritarianism that was an object of so much contempt and a major reason for embarking on the war of liberation, was retained and even fortified in the post-war dispensation.

For the majority of the people who had sacrificed by enduring the violence and brutality of the armed struggle, thinking that it was a sacrifice worth making, the new political elites were a huge disappointment. A process that was meant to remove violence and authoritarianism has, on the contrary perpetuated them. However, to expect the African petite bourgeoisie that inherited the state with its monopoly of the means of coercion to be democratic and tolerant when all they learnt in the bush was nothing except maximisation of violence to eliminate foes, real or perceived, both from without and from within the movement, is perhaps to expect too much. Faced with a threat to their hold on power, the political elites have fallen back on the means of coercion.

## ***7.4 The neo-liberal 1990s***

### **7.4.1 Road to economic structural adjustment**

Scholars have observed that the weakness of the government welfarist programme of the first decade of independence was that it was based primarily on redistribution rather than growth and the distribution was of income rather than assets (cf. Davies 2004:23). Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:308) agrees, adding that the dependence was on redistribution of what was available without clear strategies of increasing production. The gains were thus not sustainable for they did not empower recipients of the welfare to continue receiving and expand the revenue base. They placed a heavy burden on the fiscus and by so doing they sowed the seeds of their own destruction. The economy that had started so well with a boom in 1981-2 was soon faced with a crisis. By the middle of the decade, the limitations of a welfarist programme not backed by corresponding economic growth soon became clear. The economy was going through difficult times: stunted growth, low investment, foreign exchange shortages and rising debt levels. The envisaged fruits of "growth with equity" had proved elusive. The state was fast running out of money. Clearly the economy needed some form of adjustment. The IMF/WB vultures which had begun to court Zimbabwe just after independence when it joined

them were already knocking on the door, offering to “help”. In 1990, Mugabe opened for them, thus giving the economy a capitalist stamp of approval and completing the pro-capitalist turn begun at Lancaster House. By turning to the IMF/WB, a party which had been at the forefront of the struggle to end colonial inequalities and which had publicly dedicated itself to fight neo-colonialism was now involved in a process that would eventually re-impose colonial-type inequalities and a new form of imperialism in which the Bretton Woods institutions were the new colonial masters.

Although there were strong nuances of neo-liberalism underneath the ruling elite’s Marxist-Leninist rhetoric right from independence, and that neo-liberalism had become the in-thing in global economics at the time, the question that needs to be asked is: why is it that despite all that was known already about the deleterious effects of the structural adjustment programmes on the poor from other countries in the developing world, the ruling elites in Harare agreed to implement the programme? The puzzle is compounded by the observation that when Zimbabwe launched ESAP, the country was not in a large-scale economic distress, its problems being of a long-term structural nature (Skålnes 1995:118). Even though growth was not sufficient to stop escalating unemployment and real incomes had stagnated or fallen for many workers, Zimbabwe was far from experiencing the serious economic problems that plagued many other countries in sub-Saharan African.

The orthodox answer relates to the poor performance of the economy throughout the 1980s. ESAP was therefore seen as a means to give it a boost (Addison and Laakso 2003:460). Hevina S. Dashwood (1996) has made an incisive observation. She notes the emergence of a core of senior decision-makers in both cabinet and central bank as early as 1985/86 which was committed to market-based reforms. The emergence of this core, she argues, suggests that within important sections of the government, there was an independent vision about the desirability of economic reform (Dashwood 1996:39-40). While in the mid-1980s, this core was only within the powerful economic ministries and central bank, by the end of the decade, the small core had grown to be the dominant group in both party and government. Added to these were the whites who had withdrawn from political life after the revoking of their reserved parliamentary seats and were forced to advocate for their interests through business lobby groups such as the Commercial Farmers’ Union (CFU), Chamber of Zimbabwean Industry (CZI) and the Zimbabwean National Chamber of Commerce (ZNCC) (Southall 6). From the mid-1980s, there was a substantial growth in influence of the mostly white agrarian

and business elite, especially over the content of economic reforms. Tired of government's interventionism this elite class had long urged deregulation. And so for the adoption of ESAP, one must think in terms of an evolution of elite consensus which in 1989 was enough to enable Mugabe to formally decide to implement the IMF-sponsored programme. Thus while it is true that there was considerable pressure from the IMF/WB for the country to adopt neo-liberal reforms, it is disingenuous to argue that ESAP was forced down the throat of a reluctant Zimbabwe. The primary impetus for the shift in development strategy was domestic in origin (Dashwood 1996:39).

#### **7.4.2 Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP)**

The ESAP was launched with lofty goals. The missionaries of the programme explained that it would stimulate investment activity and remove existing constraints on growth. It would “herald a new era of modernised, competitive export-led industrialisation” (Mlambo 2017:7). The programme would also “open up” the economy to foreign capital and markets. The expected decline in prices of basic commodities and increase in employment due to the stampede of players on the market, would improve real incomes for the poor in the long-term. The government promised that in five years' time, the civil service would be cut by 25% and that all economic restrictions and controls, as well as government subsidies would have been done away with. Manufacturing would generate the much-needed foreign currency. Fiscal deficit would be reduced from 10% of GDP (its average during the 1980s) to 5% (Addison and Laakso 2003:459). Although the government did not privatise parastatals, it pursued their commercialisation vigorously.

The *Economic Policy Statement* of 1990 stated that government would de-emphasise expenditure on social services and emphasise investment in agriculture, mining and manufacturing (Dashwood 1996:38). The statement also stated that the government was going to do away with economic regulation in favour of an economy in which market forces play a greater role. The statement makes no reference whatsoever to the issue of distributive justice. Likewise, the 1991 *Framework for Economic Reform* also makes no reference to social justice. Rather than government intervention, faith was now put in the markets to raise incomes, generate employment and in the process improve the living standards of the poor. The welfare of the poor would be met through the benefits that come from increased income growth. Loss of emphasis on social welfare went hand-in-hand with loss of emphasis on rural

development. The belief was that the rural poor would benefit from urban remittances. The more the economy grows, the more jobs are created in the urban areas, the better for the peasants.

There were a few improvements as a result of the programme. Liberalisation eased the shortage of some consumer goods on the market. It also marked the end of the state monopoly on urban transport system and its opening up to private competitors. The result was that passengers received better and faster services. Government deficit and inflation came down briefly after having gone up in 1991-1992 (Skålnes 1995:121). The country was moving to market-determined exchange rate. Management at parastatals were given greater freedom in the hope that commercialisation would remove the need for privatisation. 18 000 civil service posts were abolished, reducing the civil service salary bill from 15.3% of GDP in 1990 to 11.3% in 1994 (Bond 2000:181).

However, in spite of these few positives, ESAP was an absolute disaster for the economy. Gains made during the first decade of independence witnessed worrying reversals. The World Bank (WB 1992:3) noted that by 1995, Zimbabwe was undergoing what in essence amounted to a counter-revolution. The liberalisation of interest rates before the fiscal deficit was under control led to the failure to reduce the latter. Parastatals continued to require huge government subsidies throughout the implementation period. The ZANU PF government could not sell them. It needed them for patronage purposes until the last possible minute and then privatise them to cronies (Bond and Manyanya 2003:165). The retrenchment of public servants was moving at a snail's pace. The much-expected growth did not materialise, reaching 5% only in 1994, and averaged just 1.2% between 1991-1995 (Bond 2000:175). Inflation never dropped to anywhere near the expected 10%. It rose to 23.3% in 1991 and shot to 42.1% the following year, before coming down to around 25% in 1994 (Skålnes 1995:141). The budget deficit was more than 10% of GDP in contrast to the targeted 5% (Bond 2000:175). It actually reached a high of 13% in 1994-95.

The lowering of tariff barriers had a shattering effect on the manufacturing sector with many factories having to scale down operations or close down, terminating tens of thousands of jobs. By 1994, some 20 710 workers had lost their jobs (WB 1992:91). Lower wages did not result in the creation of more jobs and unemployment remained rampant. Manufacturing output dropped from 32% of GDP in 1992 to a mere 14.5% by the middle of the decade

(Martorell 2002). The textile sector, in particular, was severely hit by import liberalisation, finding itself competing with cheaper overseas and regional imports. 87 companies in the sector had closed down by 1994 (Mlambo 2017:7). ZCTU (1996:49) concluded that liberalisation had turned manufacturers into traders as firms tended to stop manufacturing products locally, opting to import them directly and then selling them to local consumers. Average real earnings of private sector workers were 75% of their 1990 level by the mid-1990s, while public-sector real earnings fell to 61% of their 1990 level (Addison and Laakso 2003:461). They were most probably cut in half again in the second half of the decade. Zimbabwe's external debt went up from US\$2bn in 1991 to over US\$5bn by 1995, amounting to 91% of the country's GDP as compared to only 45% in 1989 (Mlambo 1997:3). The current account deficit was US\$489 million in 1991 and reached an unprecedented US\$840 million a year later when the country had to import most of its food requirements (Skålnes 1995:141).

Prices of basic commodities skyrocketed in the absence of government controls. While prices had more than doubled by the middle of the 1990s, average wages had risen only 45%. The ZCTU, which had just broken free from the paternalistic grip of the ruling party, was very critical of the programme. Its Secretary General, Tsvangirai, noted an increase in prices by 40% in 1992, remarking that labour was being cheapened daily (WB 1992:84). In 1996, ZCTU stated that their average member was 38% poorer than in 1980 and 40% poorer than in 1990 (Bond and Manyanya 2003:35). The local currency was devalued by more than 80%. In 1989, it was US\$1:Z\$2.113 but by 1994, it had fallen to US\$1:Z\$8. UNICEF (cited in WB 1993:86) noted in 1993 that the quality of the country's health services had decreased by 30%, that twice as many women were dying in child birth in Harare hospitals than before 1990, and that fewer people were visiting health care centres because they just could not afford to. Brain-drain was accelerated as skilled labour left the country for greener pastures. At the University of Zimbabwe, lecturers were forced to become part-time minibus taxi operators in order to make ends meet as ESAP eroded incomes.

The effects of job losses and reduction in urban incomes as a result of the collapse of the manufacturing sector, spread to rural areas which were still reeling from the effects of the 1992 drought, through a reduction in urban remittances. Run-away inflation hit the poor severely. School fees rose beyond most households' affordability levels. Clinics and hospitals

ran out of medicine. Rural agricultural support systems disappeared. Roads deteriorated due to lack of maintenance. The percentage of households living in extreme poverty increased from 61% in 1995 to 75% in 2000 (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:358). Begging, crime and homelessness, indicators of extreme economic hardships, increased dramatically in cities. Squatter settlements mushroomed in and around cities throughout the country despite repeated efforts by the government to get rid of them. By 1995, Harare had more beggars, more children living on the streets and more illegal vendors than at any other time in the history of the capital (WB 1993:92-93). The country sank into an intense economic depression.

The ESAP did not succeed in reviving the Zimbabwean economy but reversed the gains of the preceding decade and created numerous other problems for the country. All the ESAP's targets were missed by huge margins. In all respects, the ESAP failed miserably. Instead of lifting the economy out of the quagmire that it was in, the Washington-designed programme exacerbated underdevelopment and increased poverty. A representative of the World Bank in Zimbabwe admitted that the ESAP underestimated the need to deal with the country's history of economic dualism while the policy of indigenisation was not accompanied by adequate development policies (Zamponi 2005:36). With a bit of humour, Zimbabweans started to refer to ESAP as "Eternal Suffering of the African People" (Mlambo 1997:xi; Bond and Manyanya 2003:84). By 1997 when the ZANU PF government realised how disastrous the programme was for the masses and announced that it was abandoning it, it was too late. The economy was in a free fall. The government later admitted that ESAP was its worst mistake (Bond 2000:181).

Reforms were indeed needed to change the trajectory of the Zimbabwean economy after the first decade of independence. Mugabe's answer to the problems crippling his economy was an absolute disaster. The diagnosis was correct but the prescription was wrong. Patrick Bond and Masimba Manyanya (2003:xv) argue that Mugabe's government should not be blamed for the failure of the reforms for it broadly adhered to the programme, adding that its failure was intrinsic to the model imposed on the country. The World Bank's own *Project Completion Report* (2005) described Zimbabwe's implementation of the first stage of the ESAP as highly satisfactory. Mlambo (1997:x) agrees with Bond and Manyanya, adding that the problem is less to do with the lack of willingness of the ruling elite to defend the interests of the poor, but with the very structure and objectives of the reform package itself. By their

very nature, the IMF/WB reform packages are unfriendly and decidedly injurious to the poor. They favour and benefit big business and wealthy elites at the expense of the poor. Norman Girvan (cited in Khadhani 1986:114) argues that the IMF-type programmes are not ideologically neutral because their logic is evidently to support the socio-economic elites who control capital, and are therefore in a position to take advantage of the market. This explains why the local industrial and agrarian bourgeoisie (both white) and a nascent black bourgeoisie were the chief advocates of this elitist reform programme. This can also explain the complete abandoning of the social welfare policies of the previous decade, including the suspension of the land resettlement programme. The bourgeoisie had gained an upper hand in policy determination.

As shall be seen in the next chapter, a major weakness of this particular reform programme was the blind faith in market forces. Critics questioned whether exclusive reliance on market-based reforms alone would solve the country's structural challenges of poverty, underdevelopment and unemployment in the absence of other policies to accompany them if the objectives of the programme were to be met (Dashwood 1996:43). Instead of concrete poverty oriented policies, the government relied on neo-liberal faith. The reasoning was that the poor would benefit from the trickle-down effects of growth. While adopting market-based reforms, the ZANU PF government abandoned its earlier commitment to social-welfarist policies. The absence of this consideration for social welfare led to the failure to include rural development as a critical aspect of the programme intended for a country in which more than half of the population is rural. It also led to the absence of a provision for cushioning the poor from adverse effects of the programme. Thus while market-based reforms may not in themselves be against the long-term interests of the poor, but without other policies that show a concern for the welfare of the poor, chances of them improving the living standard of the poor are between very slim and none.

### **7.4.3 Primitive accumulation**

Predatory tendencies in the African petit bourgeoisie that came to power in 1980 were quite evident right from the beginning. However, this was concealed by the triumphalist mood, the purported Marxist-Leninist ideology and the developmentalist agenda that the elite pursued. The rapid pace of Africanisation of the civil service was intended to ensure that the levers of power were firmly under the control of trusted party cadres, clients and associates. In the



deployment to top positions, party credentials or personal relations were more important than qualifications and competences, and more often than not, interests of the power elite took precedence over those of the state. The ruling elite increasingly became anti-developmental the further the state moved from independence. The hardships, deprivation and suffering experienced in the bush, exile and imprisonment became for the power elite a licence to accumulate as quickly and as much as possible. It was their “time to eat”. As in the rest of post-colonial Africa, the state is the most treasured and reliable site of wealth accumulation. In an environment heavily dominated by white capital and so private sector opportunities limited, the state is the shortest route to accumulation for the African petit bourgeoisie.

Prior to independence, there was minimal social stratification in the African society because of the legislated lack of access to the means of production. But after independence, social classes began to emerge as blacks began to be deployed to senior positions in government and SEPs, becoming the new elite. Income gaps among the classes of the blacks began to widen. As the whites were leaving the country in their numbers, the new black elite moved from the townships into former white suburbs where houses were available at very low prices. The “chefs” allocated themselves large pieces of land on farms that had been deserted by the departing white farmers at bargain prices. Acquired property (low-density houses and farms) became a symbol of status. With the new-found positions and fortune, unsurprisingly, the former guerrillas’ lifestyle began to match those of the whites. A process of elite cohesion was unfolding as the interests of the two groups of the elite began to converge. The new elite became comfortable with institutional legacies of the colonial state, collaborating with white capital (Shumba 2018:39). They fitted very well into the framework created by the settlers, both socially and economically, increasing opportunities for themselves. Race was no longer that important; class was. Change was rapid, and almost instantly, riches replaced rags. High ranking party and government elites, including those who most loudly claimed to believe in socialism, preached egalitarianism during the day while nicodemously diverting public funds to private bank accounts at home and overseas, and grabbing farms, mines and companies for themselves and their clients.

The Marxist-Leninist rhetoric became a smoke screen behind which the elites pursued their own personal interests. They pressed the masses to work hard for socialist development while they amassed state resources for themselves, their extended families, girlfriends and their clients. Extravagant weekend parties, lavish weddings and top-of-the range imported vehicles

became a distinguishing characteristic of the power elite. With this new lifestyle, they quickly forgot about the existence of the folk in the townships and rural areas.

In 1984, Mugabe reminded his ministers and party elite to be aware of what he termed “bourgeois tendencies” (Bratton and Masunungure 2011:12) because he was aware that they used their control of state resources for patronage purposes and to enrich themselves. To prevent the power elite from primitive accumulation and corruption, the party introduced the much-ignored Leadership Code in 1984, a clear admission that predatory behaviour was quite alive among the party elite. The code prohibited the party elite from owning businesses, properties for rent and commercial farms. However, the code did not last beyond a couple of years as Mugabe and his cabal soon shredded it, acquiring properties and businesses and registering them under the names of relatives, girlfriends, associates and clients (Yamamoto 2008). The Marxist-Leninist rhetoric became a smoke screen behind which the elites pursued their own private interests. Obligation to extended families resulted in nepotism as senior positions in SEPs were given to relatives. After his expulsion from ZANU PF, Tekere labelled his former colleagues in the ruling party a “vampire class” of corrupt leaders (Bratton and Masunungure 2011:15).

Shortly into independence, corruption scandals which showed the vulnerability of state-owned enterprises to political interference began to be reported by the media. In the Paweni scandal of 1982, Minister Kangai, the key decision-maker in the saga escaped unscathed and continued as minister long after the scandal while the politically unprotected Samson Paweni became the “fall-guy” and got a ten-year prison sentence. Kangai would later land the lucrative Ministry of Agriculture, where under his control the Grain Marketing Board (GMB) would be looted so severely that it never recovered. He died a respected party cadre and was buried at the national heroes’ acre. The public uproar following the Willowgate scandal forced Mugabe to set up the Sandura Commission of Enquiry, which found a number of senior party officials and cabinet ministers, including Maurice Nyagumbo, Fredrick Shava, Callistus Ndlovu, Enos Nkala, Dzingai Mutumbuka and Jacob Mudenda, to have unduly benefitted from the Willowvale car sale facility. In particular, Minister Shava was criticised by Justice Sandura for “behaving like a car dealer” (Hiltzik 1989). None of them were jailed. Shava was later appointed ambassador to China and then to the UN. Mudenda was appointed chairperson of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission (ZHRC) in 2013, and later elevated

to Speaker of the national assembly. Other major scandals that slipped into the public domain and rocked the nascent state in the first decade of independence include the National Railways Housing scandal (1986), ZISCO scandal (1987) and the ZRP Santana scandal (1989).

As the country moved into the second decade of independence, it seemed the political elite had perfected the art of primitive accumulation. Under ESAP's neo-liberalism, caution was thrown to the wind as class shenanigans happened openly in broad day light. Wealth accumulation became much more rampant than in the previous decade. Jabusile M. Shumba (2018:169) observes that the period 1990-97 was one of transition from an emerging developmental state towards a predatory state. Rob Davies (2004:29) suggests an alternative reason for the adoption of ESAP by the party elite. He argues that the state had reached its limits as a site for personal wealth accumulation by the late 1980s. The constraints on state expenditure limited the scope for patronage, rent seeking and other forms of personal wealth accumulation yet the number of claimants was increasing. Furthermore, the education system was churning out young aspirants who also put pressure on the party elite to get their fair share of the cake of prosperity. Liberalisation seemed to be the only way that these young people would be able to achieve their class aim of getting rich very quickly. It opened the flood gates for predation in every sector of the economy and enabled the elite to facilitate entry of their clients into their accumulation club under the guise of "indigenisation".

Brian Raftopoulos and Daniel Compagnon (2003:25) view ZANU PF's indigenisation policy as a means to retain control over the society through patronage, and the role of the state as that of a mediator between rival clientele networks of the elite. Instead of being a development tool against poverty and unemployment, indigenisation became a tool for dispensing patronage. It essentially involved the state-controlled transfer of foreign firms to the party elite or to businessmen who were located in or connected to the corridors of state power. It was an anti-developmental accumulation project of the ruling class. It was not at all about social justice but about the redistribution of wealth and income under the control of the political elite to further its ends. The beneficiaries of the policy were the politically-connected elite and trusted foreign investors who did not threaten the power elite's aspirations. The ZANU PF government was less interested in promoting a broad-based indigenisation project than in expanding crony capitalism to serve the interests of this political elite group and its clients (Raftopoulos and Compagnon 2003:25). As it had done previously with white farms,

the political bourgeoisie was simply after seizing white and foreign owned businesses all in the name of indigenisation (Raftopoulos and Compagnon 2003:22).

The liberalisation of the economy saw the emergence of groups - such as the Indigenous Business Development Centre (IBDC) and the Affirmative Action Group (AAG) - that were aligned to the political elite demanding a share of the national cake under the banner of indigenisation. Ken Yamamoto describes these groups as “a political mafia elite that extensively fuelled network-type corruption”. This small clique of indigenous entrepreneurs was initiated by the ruling elite to serve its patronage purposes in a liberalised environment. As clients tied to ZANU PF’s patronage structures, they had privileged access to government loans and scarce foreign exchange. They became “political businessmen” interested in acquiring stakes in big lucrative companies, becoming very rich in the process. Meredith (2005:632) quotes the Affirmative Action Group (AAG)’s Philip Chiyangwa as saying, “I am rich because I belong to ZANU PF. If you want to be rich, you must join ZANU PF.” Hopes that they would form a new “capitalist” class were dashed. Davies (2004:22) notes that these individuals who used access to the state to set up business empires were not engaged as part of the reproductive circuit of capital because, instead of accumulating capital, they actually destroyed it by accumulating personal wealth. He goes on to argue that resources acquired in this way are not at all invested in productive assets, but rather in conspicuous consumption. Chiyangwa has become notorious for flaunting his wealth in public.

The African petite bourgeoisie is inherently anti-developmental, for it does not facilitate economic transformation or development. Because of the parasitic and rentier nature of this petit bourgeoisie-cum-political businessmen, this regime of accumulation never engages in productive investment or manufacturing. These are completely out of the picture of its business interests. Instead, as Shumba (2018:25) argues, the speciality of a typical rentier predatory state is resource-based accumulation. Its agenda is personal wealth accumulation and power consolidation. For David Moore (2001:258) this mode of accumulating wealth cannot be labelled “capitalist” but “feudal” because it does not involve accumulating capital in the productive sense. Thus for Davis (2004:27) personal wealth acquisition has not sown the seeds for a new capitalist class, but has rather enriched some feudal barons. Yamamoto observes that these political businessmen do not have competencies in running businesses; as such their business interests will never succeed. The tragedy of Roger Boka is a classic example of this group’s limitations. He became the first indigenous businessman to be given

a commercial banking licence. His business empire, which he built through huge loans from government-controlled financial institutions at low interest rates, crumbled spectacularly in 1998 due to bad corporate governance. He fled the country and later returned home broke and sick, but was never prosecuted. Senior party and government officials, whom he had given huge loans, attended his funeral in their numbers. Many other such political bourgeoisie with strong connections to the state have followed suit. They have tended to be more parasitic and less productive.

It seems genuine capitalists in Zimbabwe, that is, those who have gone on to establish multi-million dollar investments have emerged in the face of opposition and persecution from the state rather than by being close to it. The case of Strive Masiyiwa has shown that. The ZANU PF elite ensured that their tentacles stretched to every sector of the economy so as to prevent the emergence of autonomous indigenous capital that did not pass through them. Autonomous indigenous capital which did not court the support of the power elite was repressed and marginalised because the elite feared that it would provide an alternative power base and hence challenge its interests. Masiyiwa was to learn the hard way. He wanted to set up a cellular phone company outside ZANU PF patronage networks and in open breach of the rules of the game, refused to give free shares to ZANU PF elites. The government tried hard to prevent him from getting a licence. There were even reports of threats made on his life. Without political protection, he fought the battle all the way to the Supreme Court. His company later became Zimbabwe's largest employer.

Numerous high-profile scandals were recorded during this second decade of independence. Between 1990 and 1998, the number of corruption cases prosecuted in courts doubled to over 900 a year (Bracking 2009:42). The looting of the WVCF needs to be highlighted because of both the amounts and participants involved. Set up in 1994 to compensate ex-combatants for the injury and trauma suffered during the 1970s war, the WVCF was pillaged by the politico-military elite and their associates through exaggerating their injuries so as to inflate claims. Some cabinet ministers claimed to be mentally impaired while other recipients claimed over 100% disability. Minister Joice Mujuru claimed to be 55% disabled and was awarded a massive Z\$389 472. Embarrassed when the scandal got into the public domain, she returned the money. Reward Marufu, brother to first lady, Grace Mugabe, claimed 95% disability for "ulcers and a scar on the left knee" (Bracking 2009: 43) and was awarded Z\$821 668. War veterans leader, Chenjerai Hunzvi - who was charged with forging his own medical records

to claim compensation and was later acquitted - claimed he suffered a 117% disability and was awarded Z\$517 537. His estranged Polish wife later revealed that Hunzvi was never at the battle-front during the war but was studying medicine in Warsaw at the time. Other politico-military elites who were compensated include Air Marshal Perence Shiri (50% disability and Z\$90 249), Oppah Muchinguri Rushesha (65% disability and Z\$478 166), CIO Deputy Director-General Aaron Nhepera (98% disability and Z\$650 901), and Police Commissioner Augustine Chihuri (20% disability and Z\$138 664) (Anti-Corruption Trust of Southern Africa 2012). No one was ever prosecuted for the looting. They all kept their positions while others were even promoted. Marufu, for example, was later appointed Zimbabwe's ambassador to Canada.

Other high level corruption scandals include the VIP housing scandal (1996), Harare Refuse Tender scandal (1998), the housing loan scandal (1999), National Oil Company of Zimbabwe (NOCZIM) scandal (1999) and the GMB scandal (1999). The period also witnessed the pillaging of State-owned Enterprises and Parastatals (SEPs) by the ruling elite. One after another, SEPs were plundered and left for broke. Top government officials ran down NOCZIM, misappropriating billions meant for fuel procurement. They had easy access to fuel which they would divert to the black market. Nobody was prosecuted. The Zimbabwe Iron and Steel Company (ZISCO), once the largest integrated steelworks on the continent north of the Limpopo, was sucked dry by ZANU PF vampires who, according to the National Economic Conduct Inspectorate (NECI), included ministers Samuel Mumbengegwi, Olivia Muchena, Joice Mujuru, Stan Mudenge and Patrick Chinamasa (Yamamoto). Industry and International Trade Minister, Obert Mpofu initially told a Parliamentary Committee investigating ZISCO that senior officials had looted ZISCO but later backtracked. The VIP Housing Scheme was looted by among others, Grace Mugabe, who went on to build her famous "Gracelands" mansion, which could have built middle-income houses for twenty nine families (Yamamoto). Police chief, Augustine Chihuri and High Court Judge, Paddington Garwe, also got away with their fair share of the loot amounting to millions. The plunder of Air Zimbabwe began with the scandal surrounding the construction of the Harare International Airport terminal. Cypriot firm Air Harbour Technologies (AHT) had performed very badly in its application to the State Tender Board but still went on to win the lucrative contract because of its association with Leo Mugabe, the President's nephew, who allegedly pocketed US\$190 000 for ensuring that AHT obtained the contract (Norman

2004:103). The company also returned the huge favour by building Mugabe's iconic "Blue Roof" residence. The company reportedly "donated" tens of thousands of dollars to the ruling party and to two ministers (Shumba, p. 153). In July 1999, Company Chairman, Hani Yamani, was to complain to Mugabe after being asked to pay excessive kickbacks by some ministers (*Mail and Guardian*, 27 September 2013).

As shortages became serious due to the ESAP, some politically connected elites became "briefcase businessmen" who used their proximity to the state to access foreign exchange, import licenses, or government contracts, which they later sold to other businesses for a fortune. Some whites donated huge amounts of money to ZANU PF to court favours. In 1993, the Economist Intelligence Unit revealed that fraud and corruption in the parastatals and public service had reached "epidemic" proportions (Bratton and Masunungure 2011:17). Many became asset strippers who took over established businesses and ran them aground, affecting thousands of workers. These elites fit perfectly what Moeletsi Mbeki (cited by Chirimambowa 2018) describes as "an anti-developmental parasitic elite, only interested in their personal accumulation projects and not development of the ordinary person." The former liberation movement had turned into a leviathan, feasting on its citizens.

In the early 1990s, the media reported the corruption that was happening on the farms. Top political and military officials were granting themselves leases on farms that the state had acquired for resettlement purposes. Other farms were reportedly sold well below market value. In 1992, it was reported that high ranking bureaucrats and top government and party officials owned up to 8% of commercial farmland (Weiss 1994:187). In 1994, the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) revealed that over half of Mugabe's cabinet were its members (Dashwood 1996:33). At the end of the decade, observes Kenneth Good (2002:13), a quarter of the members of the CFU were black, most of them wealthy urban business elites. A 1994 report showed that a huge farm that had been compulsorily acquired from a white farmer for the resettlement of 33 landless families had been leased out to Minister Witness Mangwende (Meredith 2005:633). Further reports revealed that over 300 farms acquired for resettlement purposes had been handed out to the party and military elite, sometimes for a nominal rent and in other cases for no rent at all (Meredith 2005:633).

#### **7.4.4 Emergence of serious opposition**

The second decade of independence was not only the decade of the ESAP and the problems it engendered, more importantly, it also embodied a struggle by students, intellectuals, workers and civil society to reclaim and defend the few remaining democratic spaces, as democracy made its way into intensive care. It witnessed a rise in class-based and popular protests against a government which responded by increasingly resorting to authoritarianism. The legacy of liberalisation was the impoverishment of the masses by the end of the 1990s. The problems of neoliberalism went hand-in-hand with a serious democratic deficit of the revolutionary party creating conditions for a general crisis of legitimacy (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:357). Disillusionment with and resistance to ZANU PF was seen through engaging in apathy to national events (such as Independence and Heroes Day celebrations) and party activities, as well as non-participation in national elections. Opposition to ZANU PF rule that had been mute during the first decade of independence because civil society organisations had been generally supportive of the government's development programmes became pronounced as the 1990s wore out. From 1996 onwards, social unrest in the form of mass demonstrations, strikes and riots was the order of the day in big cities. The erosion of workers' wages led to intensified strike action that attracted increasing numbers of workers from across the sectors (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:357). Civil servants also became increasingly militant, with the 1996 national strike dealing the confidence of the state a particularly hard blow (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:357). In black townships, residents rioted over food and fuel price hikes. The food riots left dozens of casualties at the hands of the police. 1997 saw a record number of strikes and mass actions.

ZCTU, which had just woken up from a deep post-independence slumber and declared independence from ZANU PF, was able to organise and mobilise workers - including those from the public sector - at a national scale (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:357). Enjoying massive support from the workers, it began to challenge ZANU PF's economic and political policies. Under the able leadership of Tsvangirai, the labour federation called a general strike in 1997 and mass stay-aways in 1998 that were heeded by the workers. In so doing, a major social force with structures countrywide and an alternative national vision had arrived on the Zimbabwean landscape; a force that could no longer be dismissed as representing minority interests, a force with the capability to develop a broad social alliance against the state (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:358). With the deepening of the political crisis and



economic collapse, the regime remained largely unresponsive and appeared clueless on how to arrest the decline. ZCTU filled the vacuum and became a leading political force in the country. It eloquently articulated the connections between the crisis and the broader issues of democratisation. That way it won hearts and minds, not just of the workers, but also of the unemployed, students, civil society organisations and churches, as well as the peasants in rural areas who felt the impact of the crisis the most. Seeing Tsvangirai as a rabble-rouser, suspected war veterans savagely beat him up in his office (Addison and Laakso 2003:462). He was also arrested and kept incommunicado for a week. This persecution earned him respect, raised his profile in the public eye and turned him into a national figure (Kagoro 2003:17). As the national cake continued to shrink, Mugabe responded with increasing closure of democratic spaces. ZCTU joined forces with a wide range of civil society organisations around the problems of democratisation and human rights, areas in which the abuses of the ruling ZANU PF had become blatant.

At about the same time, ZANU PF tasted its own medicine when, from within its ranks, the veterans of the war of liberation, who had been neglected by the regime since the end of the war, rose up and confronted Mugabe over their welfare, posing a serious threat both to his rule and the continued stay of his party in power. Fearing the loss of a key ally that had played a significant role in mobilising support for the party in the rural areas, Mugabe gave in to their demands and in November 1997 awarded the 60 000-strong ex-guerrillas a once-off Z\$50 000 and promised them a further Z\$2 000 monthly pension plus free education and health care for the rest of their lives. He also promised them 20% of the land that would be expropriated from whites. These huge amounts - in the range of Z\$4.5 billion - had not been factored into the 1997 budget. The deal was a budget buster. On “Black Friday”, 14 November 1997, the Zimbabwe dollar fell from around Z\$10 to below Z\$30 to the US\$, losing 74% of its value, over a four-hour trading period (Bond and Manyanya 2003:xi). The currency crash was so severe, quite possibly the worst ever experienced in such a short time in modern history outside of war time (Bond and Manyanya 2003:xii). Bond and Manyanya (2003:38) add that this is the precise moment when the Zimbabwean economy began the plunge that would characterise the economy for the next two decades. This agreement between the government and the war veterans completely reconfigured Zimbabwe’s political economy. By yielding to their demands and giving them a strategic role in the ruling

coalition, Mugabe put a definitive end to the era of ESAP and the influence of technocrats on policy making in Zimbabwe (Bratton 2014:68).

The fiscal position of the country further deteriorated when in August 1998, Mugabe deployed thousands of his troops to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in defence of discredited President Laurent Kabila against rebels backed by Rwanda and Uganda. Mugabe unilaterally took the decision without consulting Parliament or his cabinet. Some observers speculated that Mugabe got involved in the war out of ego. The shift of the limelight from him to South Africa's Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki led him to look north to the Congo to prove that he remained a player on the wider African scene (International Crisis Group [ICG] September 2000:6). A cabinet minister claimed in 2000 that the army was in the DRC "for the sake of generating the necessary revenue" instead of "burdening the treasury" (Addison and Laakso 2003:462).

Critics, however, viewed this cavalier involvement in the war as an attempt by Mugabe to buy the loyalty of the army by providing its high-ranking officers opportunities for personal enrichment in the mineral trade. Southall (Unpublished 21) argues that the Congo debacle was driven by the politico-military elite's interest in gaining access to that country's mineral resources. Indeed a later UN report (2001) into the DRC conflict underscored that the failing mining industry and the severe shortage of energy in Zimbabwe had left few avenues for personal enrichment by government officials. The UN accused the Harare elites of systematically looting the wretched Congo. Political, military and economic elites were said to have been making millions of dollars in the Congo particularly through diamond mining. Emmerson Mnangagwa was explicitly mentioned as the key figure in Zimbabwe's commercial involvement (UN 2001:17). But while some members of the ruling elite and top army chiefs enriched themselves in the jungles of the Congo, the fiscus appears to have lost more than it gained. Estimates indicated that the war was costing the nation around US\$1 million a day (Ferrett 2001:157). Finance minister Simba Makoni stated in August 2000 that government had spent US\$200 million on the war since 1998, adding that Zimbabwe could no longer sustain the costs. 13 000 troops, about a third of the national armed forces, were believed to have been in the Congo at the height of the war, while a growing number of casualties were being flown back home under the cover of darkness. While authorities

claimed that less than 100 troops had died in the Congo, reliable military sources said the number was a lot more than that, probably around 700 (Good 2002:19).

Fatigue associated with government's failures was not restricted to the urban areas, but also spread to the rural areas where, in 1998, peasants now tired of waiting for the promised land, nearly two decades into independence, started to occupy white commercial farms in a way that was spontaneous, peaceful and not determined by ZANU PF. These land occupations reminded the ZANU PF government of the need to revisit land reform. To save face, Mugabe relaunched the ideology of land redistribution. In the context of social unrest and a government that had fallen from popular grace and whose legitimacy was fading fast, the issue of land reform acquired a prominent role in the consensus-building strategy of ZANU-PF (Zamponi 2005:36). Nearly 5 000 white-owned farms were gazetted for compulsory acquisition in November 1997. The intensifying economic and social collapse coupled with the increased mobilisation of some social groups that had been badly affected by the liberalisation of the economy under the ESAP, forced Mugabe to turn his back on economic reforms and to resort to authoritarianism and populism in order to re-gain his legitimacy especially among the rural voters.

Another key issue that dominated Zimbabwean politics in the late 1990s was the need for a new constitution. The Lancaster House Constitution was viewed as a compromise document and had been amended several times by the ZANU PF dominated parliament. It was widely seen as a source of the governance challenges that the country faced. For instance, too much power was vested in the head of state and, without any checks and balances, Mugabe had abused it with impunity. A cross-class alliance composed of the labour federation, human rights activists, various Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), the inhibited petit bourgeoisie, students, sympathetic business liberals, church-based activists, among others, emerged around issues of human rights abuses, accountability and abuse of public funds (Bond and Manyanya 2003:74). They saw a clear link between the crisis the nation was in and the broader problems of democratisation. They formed the National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) in January 1998, advocating a new home-grown constitution. ZANU PF could only afford to ignore the NCA at its own peril. It formed its own commission to solicit the citizens' views and draft a new constitution. The NCA boycotted the ZANU PF process alleging that the president had too many powers and could amend or reject the commission's proposals. The NCA popularised its campaign vigorously. In February 1999, a National

Working People's Convention was called at which delegates unanimously took a decision to form a broad-based, credible opposition party, facilitated by the ZCTU, to contest the 2000 and 2002 elections. The Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) was officially launched on 11 September 1999. Courageous trade unionist, Tsvangirai, who had scored many spectacular victories against Mugabe, was the obvious choice for party leader.

### ***7.5 A new Zimbabwe, a new beginning***

Running on the ticket of change, promising a “new Zimbabwe” and a “new beginning”, the MDC emphasised civic, political and human rights, pointing to the democratic deficit of the ruling party and building on the popular frustration with ZANU PF. Tsvangirai located his movement within a post-nationalist terrain (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:318). The cross-class alliance was like one big church composed of people from all walks of life, with all sorts of interests and expectations. Contradictions were evident in the multi-class project right from the beginning. The workers wanted the party to be an independent voice to fight ZANU PF's neo-liberal policies that had led to their pauperisation. Academics and other professionals joined the party probably as a way of going up the ladder of social recognition. The emergence of the MDC as a viable alternative to ZANU PF helped politically remobilise whites. Seeing their interests threatened by the increasingly radical speeches of the ZANU PF government over the land issue, white farmers felt that the MDC was the only political formation with a realistic chance of upsetting the discredited ZANU PF. They started to support the MDC both financially and otherwise and, more importantly, played a pivotal role in determining the party's economic policies. For example, the MDC's economic advisor, Eddie Cross, was a leading member of the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (CZI), which was known for its advocacy of neo-liberal policies and had applauded ZANU PF for embracing liberalisation in 1990.

The MDC reflected a leaning towards a social democratic transformation agenda within a neo-liberal paradigm. The socialists within the movement had a problem with that. MDC MP, Munyaradzi Gwisai, for example, was a committed socialist who later clashed with the party leadership because of his left-leaning views and expelled from the party. The Ndebele's, resentful of ZANU PF because of *Gukurahundi*, wasted no time in finding their political home in the MDC. The whole Matabeleland region would embarrass ZANU PF at every election thereafter as they would vote overwhelmingly for the MDC. While the urbanites had

supported the party even before it was officially born, the rural folk were not left behind. It seems the broad base of the MDC was both its strength and its weakness at the same time. It seems each of these segments of the party saw the MDC as the only party that would safeguard its interests. This led *The Insider* (Rukuni 2002) to observe that “the MDC is really a coalition of different forces which in normal circumstances would not be compatible”. The bulletin went on to note that what kept it going was its pursuit of power, adding: “Everyone thought the party was going to win the (2002) presidential elections, get rid of Mugabe and perhaps they could *go their separate ways* once Mugabe was out of the way” (Rukuni 2002). The party did not wait for Mugabe to go before wide cracks began to emerge in the movement. The party was to split a couple of times due to irreconcilable differences within the leadership. As a very broad-based movement encompassing varied interests from the business elite to the unemployed, it would be very difficult to consolidate its position as, for example, only one interest-based political group would do.

### **7.5.1 Mugabe tastes defeat**

The government’s Constitutional Commission undertook countrywide consultations and produced a draft constitution which was put to a referendum in February 2000. Unfortunately, the draft ignored widespread public sentiment in favour of a limit on the number of terms which the president could serve. Government poured a lot of resources in the campaign for a “Yes” vote. The party and government were confident that Zimbabweans would accept the constitution and Mugabe would rule forever. The NCA/MDC coalition campaigned hard for the rejection of what they viewed as a ZANU PF document that had ignored citizens’ submissions. To the government’s surprise and consternation, the draft constitution was rejected by 55 - 45% of the votes. The Helen Suzman Foundation [HSF] (2002) alleges that ZANU PF rigged the referendum in its favour but still lost. What made the result significant is that it was the first time that the party and government had lost an election since coming to power in 1980. More importantly, the referendum was widely viewed as a proxy vote for Mugabe and ZANU PF’s legitimacy. It was widely seen as a rejection not only of the draft constitution but of ZANU PF itself and of Mugabe himself.

Tony Addison and Liisa Laakso (2003:464) observe that in contrast to the 1990 and 1995 elections, there was a high turnout of urban voters and a low rural turnout, something that seemed to reflect increasing disillusionment with the party among rural voters. Equally

important, the victory of the “No” vote revived diminishing faith that an election could actually bring about the end of Mugabe’s authoritarian rule (Good 2002:24). The myth of Mugabe’s invincibility was dispelled. The loss indicated, not only dissatisfaction with the ruling ZANU PF, but the capacity to mobilise this discontent into an effective opposition (Raftopoulos and Phimister, 2003:346). Things did not look good for ZANU PF. Mugabe was restless. The party was confronted with the real danger of losing the general election in a few months’ time, as well as the presidential election in 2002. Mugabe knew that his political ship was sinking and had to act and act fast to find a quick solution. It was no longer business as usual. He was in a defensive mood; complete with the ferocious instruments of repression inherited from racist Rhodesia and perfected over the years, ready and willing to show his opponents that while control over the economy was slipping through his fingers, politically he was firmly in charge.

## **7.6 The lost decade: 2000 - 2008**

*We have tainted what was a glorious revolution, reducing it to some agrarian racist enterprise; we have behaved over the last few years as if the world owes a living. It does not; we have blamed other people for each and every ill that befell us; and as every peasant, worker, businessman or woman now stares at the precipice of doom, let us wake up and draw back. We must clear the slate, bury everything that has divided us and begin again* (Edison Zvobgo, cited in Cornwell 2000:6).

The almost instant and widespread support of the MDC and its challenge of the hitherto unrivalled dominance of ZANU PF frightened the latter and created a sense of panic in the party. The historic defeat marked a crucial turning point in Zimbabwean politics. It signalled to ZANU PF that unless drastic measures were taken, its hold on political power was surely going to end fatefully. Faced with an election against an MDC that had been buoyed by the referendum win and experiencing an upsurge in popularity, the shocked ZANU PF responded by unleashing a chain of violent interventions, reviving of its latent leftist rhetoric and resurrecting the liberation war mantra. Its most militant and lethal version of nationalist demagoguery was also resurrected. The national democratic revolution was now in its final phase. The Third *Chimurenga* had begun. A period marked by racist political rhetoric, economic collapse, unprecedented intolerance and erosion of the rule of law had begun. A

period of uninterrupted chaos had arrived. The stage was set for a cataclysmic economic collapse.

### **7.6.1 The Third *Chimurenga***

Smarting from the defeat, the party started looking for scapegoats. The state propaganda machinery which had been dormant for years had to be woken up. Mugabe employed an expert propagandist in the person of one-time critic Jonathan Moyo, who according to Chitando (2005:224) masterminded “one of the most sustained propaganda campaigns in post-colonial Africa”. Mandaza (2007:12) adds that Moyo provided a cutting edge to a state under siege and a party virtually on the ropes. The NCA/MDC coalition had received significant and open support from the white farming community which had increasingly come under attack from ZANU PF. Capitalising on this, the ZANU PF propaganda machinery crafted a theory of an axis of evil between the MDC, civil society, and white imperial interests (Kagoro 2003:21). The “No” vote was interpreted as a vote sponsored by white farmers and their kith and kin, mostly in England but also in other Western countries against the provision of the compulsory acquisition of the land by the state in the rejected constitution. In ZANU PF’s scheming, the white farmers and the Western imperialist countries were the brains behind the MDC. Fearing loss of their land, they had created and were sponsoring the MDC so that it would defeat the revolutionary party and then they would keep their land. The MDC was therefore not an indigenous party that represented the interests of the masses who wanted their land back. Rather, Tsvangirai and his party were puppets of the West and agents of imperialism. They were a front for white interests and enemies of the people, hell-bent on reversing the gains of liberation. The MDC puppets and their white sponsors were behind unconstitutional attempts to effect “regime change” in the country.

By associating with imperialists, the MDC puppets had made themselves enemies of the people and had to be eliminated by any means necessary. The MDC was not only delegitimised, but was also ideologically “denationalised” because of this association with imperialist forces and as such they could not be “true” Zimbabweans, and existed merely as puppets of the West (van Vuuren 2005:8). Once this narrative was accepted, it was used to justify the heartless persecution of known or suspected MDC supporters and the ruthless disregard for human rights. Tsvangirai became a favourite whipping boy of state media and cartoonists. Far from it being a contest to win votes and retain state power, it was elevated to

a struggle against British and American imperialism. The enemy was no longer the MDC but the two Western countries and their allies. The MDC and the white farmers were mere agents. The beleaguered regime vowed “Zimbabwe will never be a colony again” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:332).

### **7.6.2 The land is the economy**

Promises of land expropriation had been reiterated at each election campaign, beginning in 1980, with the rhetoric becoming more aggressive since the adoption of the ESAP. Yet very little was done in twenty years to translate the rhetoric into action. Initially, government attributed the slow pace of reform to the LHA. However, the fact that the government did not embark on such a programme after the 1990 expiry of the Lancaster House constitutional provision suggests other factors at play. With time, the land issue became a political issue with ZANU PF electoral candidates resurrecting it during the run-up to elections and then allowing it to die immediately afterwards. As long as the land question remained unresolved, it served ZANU PF’s election campaigns very well. Addison and Laakso (2003:459) argue that ZANU PF hegemony over the rural areas would have declined if greater progress had been made in improving rural livelihoods through a progressive land reform programme earlier. This may explain why land reform had less priority than the government’s election rhetoric would suggest.

But with nothing else to give to the despondent electorate that had lost faith in the nationalist project and crushed by the weight of poverty, Mugabe took out his (last) trump card from his cabinet. To eliminate the MDC puppet, it was necessary to strike at the heart of the source of the wealth of the sponsor. The land which gave them economic muscle had to be taken away, thus settling the land question once and for all. The war veterans whose loyalty Mugabe had bought in 1997 were mobilised and given the mandate to execute the last stage of the revolution. Within days of the referendum, land invasions started. Thus began the Fast Track Land Reform Programme (FTLRP). ZANU PF called it the *Third Chimurenga*, the final struggle to complete the total liberation of the masses, reuniting them with their land. The land that had been violently grabbed from the blacks by the colonisers was going to be repossessed by any means necessary. The programme was popularly referred to as *jambanja* because of its violent and chaotic nature (Masunungure 2006:6).



The farm occupiers were transported, sponsored, sustained and paid by the government (Hunter et al. 2001:17). Mugabe portrayed the invasions as driven by landless peasants, and so could not ask the occupiers to leave the farms. The International Bar Association (cited in Good 2002:14) concluded that, a “considerable body of evidence indicated that government and party officials assisted the invasions.” Police took no action to protect the lives or property of the farmers or their workers. They were under instruction to turn a deaf ear. The government encouraged and applauded the violation of its own laws. Some white farmers tried to resist eviction, but a combination of the marauding war veterans, the youth militia, and the police was too much for them. Around two hundred were arrested for defying the order to stop farming activities (Addison and Laakso 2003:465). Some fled their farms under the cover of darkness with nothing except the clothes they were putting on. Thirteen of them lost their lives together with more than 150 other people, mostly farm workers, while thousands were injured (Sachikonye 2003:235). Farming equipment, livestock, crops, buildings, including houses and furniture, became property of the leaders of the invading mobs.

Aggrieved farmers approached the courts seeking justice. Judgements declared the farm invasions illegal and ordered the government to evict the farm invaders. But the ZANU PF government would have none of it and refused to comply with the judgements. Instead, party officials and war veterans attacked the judiciary. White members of the bench were described as legal spill-overs from the colonial era, who were ill-qualified to pass judgments on politically sensitive cases such as the land reform. Antony Gubbay, the Zimbabwe-born white Chief Justice, in particular, was severely attacked after he ruled that the FTLRP was illegal. In November 2000, war veterans invaded the Supreme Court. Gubbay was forced to take early retirement. In his place, Godfrey Chidyausiku, a former deputy minister in Mugabe's cabinet and a beneficiary of the land reform program known to be sympathetic to ZANU PF, was given the job ahead of more senior judges. He did not disappoint, ruling that the land reform was a “matter of social justice and not, strictly speaking, a legal issue” (Dansereau 2005:19). Human Rights Watch (HRW November 2008) reported that as many as eight judges resigned with the majority of them fleeing into exile, due to political interference and intimidation. These were replaced with judges that could dance according to Mugabe's tune. Thus, the judiciary was reshaped to guarantee greater compliance with ZANU PF dictates, compromising the integrity of the once-respected legal system.

The Third *Chimurenga* was not just a violent exercise, but like the second, it also had an equally strong ideological side. Likening the development and maintenance of authoritarian elite domination in Zimbabwe to that of Nazi Germany and apartheid South Africa, Willem van Vuuren (2005:13) observed that Mugabe's authoritarianism was built on a combination of terror and intimidation, on the one hand, and on propaganda and mass manipulation, on the other.

Chitando has explored the Third *Chimurenga*'s appropriation of Christian and traditional African religious ideas to develop its own "theology of the land" (Chitando 2005:224). He observed how the creation story in Genesis 1 was recast and ideologically linked to the land question in Zimbabwe. In the beginning was the land, and black people owned the land. God set aside Zimbabwe as the sacred space for black people. Black ownership of land in Zimbabwe was, therefore, consistent with the divine order of things. The invasion of white-owned farms was an integral part of the divine plan to ensure black dignity. In this theology, Mugabe was the biblical Moses sent to deliver the Promised Land to his people. The lyrics of Christian hymns were transformed to convey political messages about the revolutionary party, the land, and the obedient Mugabe. For example, a popular Christian hymn whose words, "I will never want if Jesus is with me", was changed to: "I will never want if Mr Mugabe is with me" (Chitando 2005:229).

Chitando also notes how during the war of liberation, ZANU consistently maintained that the struggle was a fulfilment of the spirit medium Ambuya Nehanda's prophecy that "my bones will rise up", defeat the whites, and repossess the land. The legend of Nehanda was resurrected and expressed through songs and literary works. State media - newspapers, radio and the sole television station – were used to warn Zimbabweans of the threat posed by the MDC and the whites against the recovery of the stolen land. Jingles were played every fifteen minutes on all four state-owned radio stations and on television, focussing on the importance of the land for the identity of the Zimbabwean (black) people and as part of the broad programme of creating a "patriotic citizenry" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:332). Day-in day-out, state media sang the praises of the party, its leader and the war veterans as the sole representatives of the interests of the nation, and articulating the basic tenets of the Third *Chimurenga*. Carefully selected intellectuals were used to provide a continuous and repetitive ideological message in order to set the parameters of a stable national identity conducive to

the consolidation of the power by the ruling party (van Vuuren 2005:15). Musical events in honour of some of the “fathers” of the Second *Chimurenga* (Nkomo and Simon Muzenda) were organised during important holidays aimed at mobilising the masses for the Third *Chimurenga*.

The revived nationalism took on a selective reading of history, smoothing the various and complex narratives of the war of liberation in favour of its narrow, exclusive, and racialised narrative of ZANU PF. The land became the sole authentic signifier of national belonging; it became a key marker of African identity and being. Thus the use of the term *vana vevhu* (children of the soil) to refer to black Zimbabweans (Chitando 2005:226). The ZANU PF slogan - *The Land is the economy and the economy is the land* - captured the centrality of the land in the party’s scheming. The land was skilfully manipulated to appear as if it were the be-all and end-all of the Zimbabwean economy and the sole reason for the 1970s bloody war. According to Chitando (2005:223), the nationalists were effectively rewriting the history of the struggle and reducing it to one theme, the land. All the other aspects of the struggle, such as the right to vote, democracy, human rights, and equality were deleted from the narrative of the struggle (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:237). The liberation war was not about building democracy and the institutions and values which sustain it, but about land. Brian Raftopoulos and Ian Phimister (2003:378) argue, however, that electoral issues and human rights played an important role during the war of liberation and were an important part of the demands of the nationalists. Far from being a political issue, the land question assumed immense traditional religious significance. With the land issue sacralised, Mugabe was portrayed as an obedient son, acting in accordance with the demands of the ancestors.

When the dust had settled, large pieces of land had been given to the political elite, which included cabinet ministers, party officials, senior military officers, high-ranking civil servants and judges. These became the core of a black proto-capitalist land owning class (Southall Unpublished 20). War veterans, party loyalists, and peasants from communal areas were also allocated pieces of land. Farm workers and opposition supporters lost out. Originally set to end in August 2000, the occupations continued until mid-2003, and then subsided in 2004. This final phase of the process was the “land grab” by the black elite. By the end of the decade, only around 500 white farmers were left and 14.5 million hectares out of the 15.5 million in white hands in 1980 had been acquired, making it the largest property transfer ever

to occur in the region in peacetime. 7 200 black commercial farmers (A2) were created and 127 000 blacks received household-based small-scale farms (A1) (p. 32).

### **7.6.3 Effects of the FTLRP**

The effects of the FTLRP were disastrous and did not take long to be noticed. Addison and Laakso (p. 464) estimate that as of June 2000 the direct cost of the farm invasions stood at a massive Z\$430 million. Agricultural production plummeted resulting in a steep decline in food output. At the end of 2003, agricultural production was at its lowest since the late 1980s. In 2001, agriculture was about 22% of GDP but it had fallen to about 10% in 2008 (AfDB 2011:5). In a study, John Robertson (cited in Mlambo 2017:25) shows a steep decline in the production of maize from 2 million to a mere 600 000 tonnes between 2000 and 2012 and wheat production from 300 000 to 10 000 tonnes during the same period. Tobacco, the main source of foreign exchange, saw the most severe decline as a result of the FTLRP. Food shortages began to be felt as early as 2001. Once a food surplus country and breadbasket of the sub-region, Zimbabwe had degenerated into a basket case, importing food to feed its starving people.

Most of the beneficiaries of the FTLRP had no farming experience or capital for inputs and implements. The idea that farming ought to be a viable business was lost to many. Reports were in fact emerging that the newly resettled farmers were selling the inputs and equipment that were left behind by the former white owners. The broke government could not afford to provide the new farmers with the inputs. The International Crisis Group (ICG September 2000:6) remarked that the FTLRP was going to be a disaster for the country: “This is not land reform; it is a politically driven land grab which will devastate Zimbabwe's agriculturally based economy without immediately benefiting those being resettled.” Media reports were also emerging that some beneficiaries were leasing their farms to the former owners. Many of the new farmers became “cell phone farmers”, directing farm activities by phone from their luxurious city homes (Mlambo, 2017:24). The government made it worse by not giving them title deeds. That meant that they could not use the land as collateral when applying for bank loans. The AfDB (2011:5) highlighted the “lack of security of tenure” as an impediment to meaningful investment in agriculture. Denial of title deeds on the land was a political move by the regime. Raftopoulos and Phimister (2003:372) suggest that for the ruling elite, control of land in general and commercial farm land in particular, is the central platform of a longer-

term project to control other sectors of the economy, given the dependence of these sectors on agriculture.

Farm infrastructure declined, schools and healthcare facilities on acquired farms were shut down. Large amounts of land were left unutilised. The collapse of the agricultural sector had a devastating impact on the manufacturing sector which led to the inevitable decline of the national economy as a whole (Mlambo 2017:22). As Mugabe was punishing the white farmers and the MDC, he did not give any thought to the 200 000 farm workers and their dependents (about 10% of the population) who would be displaced as new settlers took over (ICG, September 2000:6). Three years into the FTLRP, less than 1% of them had been allocated land (Magaramombe 2010:361). About two-thirds of the original farm work-force had lost their jobs and homes. Many went from being employed to casual work and piece jobs, illegal gold-panning, and illicit beer-brewing. Many others went into petty trading, theft, and prostitution. Some migrated to urban areas, communal areas, and informal settlements. Some tracked their steps back to the land of their ancestors in the neighbouring countries. But the majority remained in the farm villages to survive on the charity and goodwill of the new owners, or face destitution. Godfrey Magaramombe (2010:361) emphasises that the displacement of farm workers was “socio-economic rather than geographical”, that is, *in situ* displacement. Mugabe celebrated the “success” of reform as consisting in the resettling of over 135 000 families, while paying no attention to the displaced 200 000 farm workers and their families.

The deliberately engineered chaos of the FTLRP provided great opportunities for the petty bourgeoisie and comprador classes to engage in ravenous primitive accumulation. Bond and Saunders (2005:48-49) observe that the FTLRP was fraught with high-level state corruption because it entailed reallocation of large-scale agricultural assets in a climate of low transparency and high partisanship. In such an environment, rampant patronage and multiple farm ownership were inevitable. The elite and their clients took advantage of the chaos to acquire huge tracts of prime commercial farmland. Media reports revealed that the ruling elite was allocating itself the best land. A 2010 investigation uncovered that a small group of about 2 200 politically connected elite acquired 40% of the land redistributed under the FTLRP, totalling about 5 million hectares of the best farming land (Shumba 2018:80). The same investigation revealed that Mugabe’s wife, Grace, owned 14 farms; then Vice President Joice Mujuru and her husband owned 25 farms. It also found out that all of the party’s 56 politburo

members, 98 parliamentarians, 35 senators, and all ten provincial governors were allocated farms, with four governors having multiple farms; 16 judges also benefitted (Sims 2011:8). Thus the elite were the major beneficiaries of a process which was supposed to have aimed at poverty reduction and decongestion of communal areas (Sachikonye 2003:236). A leaked government land audit revealed the chaos that accompanied the FTLRP: use of hired thugs by sections of the party elite to violently remove resettled peasants; elite struggles over prime land; and multiple farm ownership among the ruling elite (*Africa Confidential*, 21 February 2003). The scramble for land is another indication of the predatory tendencies of the ruling bourgeoisie that aims for instant accumulation with state backing. The so-called Third *Chimurenga* was an elite dominated primitive accumulation drive under the guise of black economic empowerment (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:180).

Lloyd Sachikonye (2003:239) critiques the FTLRP on the ground that the government adopted a piecemeal approach to the land issue, adding that the land reform should have been integrated into a wider agrarian and development strategy (Sachikonye (2003:239). Clever Mumbengegwi (1986:219) critiques government's narrow emphasis on resettlement, which simply involved moving peasants from one place to the other, instead of a comprehensive agrarian reform. The emphasis on numbers of the resettled has obscured other vital dimensions, such as infrastructure and support to make the reform sustainable (Sachikonye, 2003:238). Probably a major weakness of the land reform programme was lack of the realisation that agrarian reform ought to be tied to a vision of industrial transformation. An industrialisation programme was needed to accompany the agrarian reform programme. This would have entailed that an increasing percentage of employment and contribution towards GDP would come from industry rather than agriculture (Sachikonye 2005:43). Furthermore, the mass movement of people from communal areas to white farms was never going to reduce congestion in the former. Only with industrial growth momentum would people move from rural to urban areas, freeing up land for farmers who wished to expand their operations (Sachikonye 2005:43).

One comes to the conclusion that while land reform was necessary, indeed overdue, the Mugabe regime was not guided by a coherent economic redistribution policy or a genuine desire to redistribute land to the landless masses. The government had twenty years, especially after the end of the restrictive LHA, in which to plan and implement an orderly

“revolutionary” land reform programme that would result in the decongestion of communal areas and contribute significantly to agricultural production in particular, and to the broader economy in general. When the party still commanded unassailable support, the land question was not a priority. It was the MDC threat that made ZANU PF smell defeat and wake up from the slumber of complacency. It was only when the tool box of winning elections was empty that the majority party suddenly realised that there was an unresolved land issue. To blindly praise the FTLRP as a revolutionary campaign is to ignore the fact that the timing and method were dictated, not so much by the need to right the wrongs of the colonial past, but by a desperate desire by a beleaguered ruling party to starve off the very serious challenge for political survival mounted by the MDC and to punish white farmers, its supposed sponsors (Mlambo 2005:3). The FTLRP was purely a political smoke-screen that was seized by a desperate and bankrupt regime as a populist survival strategy (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2013:181). A genuine grievance of the masses was exploited in order to secure political terrain. An obvious historical necessity was made political for electoral purposes, unfortunately becoming an avenue of predation by the politico-military elite and its clients, and consequently destroying a key pillar of the economy. We argue that the very disruptive and violent manner, including the loss of human lives, was not necessary and cannot be justified. If land reform had been properly carried out, it would have provided an excellent opportunity for the redress of past imbalances and set the country on a developmental trajectory. In the end, the FTLRP was an elite dominated primitive accumulation drive under the guise of black economic empowerment (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:180).

#### **7.6.4 The predatory military elite**

A discussion of the political economy of post-colonial Zimbabwe cannot be complete without underlining the role of the military, in particular, and the security forces, in general. The executive-military relations have their roots in the 1970s war when the political elites were the commanders of their military wings while the military elites were part of the Joint High Command and the War Council, the political-cum-military structures which served as links between the military and the political leaderships (Moyo 2014:72). The symbiotic relationship between the two groups of elites was such that the military always had a say on who the leader of the party (and their Commander-in-Chief) was. In addition to military training, the guerrillas also underwent ideological training, which made them operate as “military cum mini-politicians” who recruited the masses on behalf of the civilian leadership

which for the most part was either in jail or in exile. The post-colonial state thus inherited a highly politicised and highly indoctrinated military. The top hierarchy of the security sector in the post-independence era has been made up exclusively of senior cadres who fought the war alongside the civilian leadership and with whom they shared the same ideological orientation. Predictably, the war-time civilian-military relations have had a lasting influence on the post-colonial state-military relations, leading to the serious politicisation of the security sector and heavy militarisation of politics (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2006).

While the two have always been closely linked, initially the military maintained its professionalism, not willing to openly meddle in politics. Military commanders had indeed sat on the party's decision-making structures, but by and large, they had been behind the scenes. It was only when ZANU PF's hegemony was waning, with the popular discontent in the late 1990s due to hardships caused by the ESAP, that the security organs of the state - the military, police and the intelligence - gradually entered the civilian sphere. But it was the arrival of the MDC that turned Zimbabwe into a "neo-praetorian state in which the military elite rules along with the political elite as a diarchy" (Gorden Moyo 2014:70). This diarchy is a symbiotic relationship of mutual benefits in which the executive depends on the military for regime survival and, in return, the political elite accords special treatment to the military. In actual fact, this client-patron relationship has, to all intents and purposes, turned Zimbabwe into a "neo-patrimonial qua neo-praetorian state" (Gorden Moyo 2014:74). The military became privatised and started acting as the *de facto* military wing of ZANU PF, becoming the party's domestic anchor class and a safeguard against threats to its grip on power (Gorden Moyo 2014:69). The securocrats became the central nervous system of the Mugabe regime that ensured its survival. Michael Bratton and Eldred V. Masunungure (2011:45) argue that the military elite have been behaving more like a private army of a warlord than a professional army in a constitutional democracy. ZANU PF's battle for political survival was turned into a military operation with Zimbabwe being turned into an "operational zone" and military coercion becoming the currency of politics (Chitiyo and Rupiya 2005:359). The securocrats openly showed that they served the interests of Mugabe and his party more than those of the state and the people, declaring unbending and unbreakable loyalty to ZANU PF and describing themselves as an essential vanguard of the state leading Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2006) to call them "nationalists in uniforms."



Meeting the needs of the military elite was of paramount importance in this client-patron relationship. The party was aware of the dangers of a dissatisfied military. *The Standard* (3 February 2002) reported that there was discontent within the military over remuneration and working conditions. Media reports from the late 1990s showed that the military had a salary structure different from the rest of the civil service and that the security sector was funded from the President's Office, and so its budget did not appear in the Finance minister's statement for scrutiny. The military elite were receiving massive salary increases when the lower ranks and the rest of the civil service were getting lesser hikes or none. They were also rumoured to be receiving handsome perks, which included top-of-the-range vehicles, urban residential stands and farms. But these alone were not enough to allow the military elite to lead a life on a par with the political and business elite. Thus the deployment of the Zimbabwe army in the Congo, with all the consequent lucrative contracts, should be viewed as a way of appeasing and serving the accumulation needs of the military elite. Through the tellingly named *Operation Sovereign Legitimacy* (OSLEG), a subsidiary of Zimbabwe Defence Industries (ZDI), the military elites were involved in mining and timber-logging in the forests of the Congo. Zimbabwe Defence Force Commander (ZDF), General Vitalis Zvinavashe, and then Speaker of Parliament, Emmerson Mnangagwa, were listed by a UN report among 54 top individuals responsible for looting minerals during the conflict in Congo (UN 2002). The Congo adventure paid dividends because, from then on, the security sector's loyalty to Mugabe became unbreakable. The securocrats would play a leading role in the FTLRP and acquired multiple farms in that chaos. They would also be fingered in the violence that befell the opposition and pro-democracy activists. For example, after Mugabe's resignation, Jonathan Moyo alleged that General Chiwenga and his securocrats were behind the abduction and disappearance of human rights activist Itai Dzamara in 2015 (*Bulawayo24.com*, 30 Jan 2018).

The declaration by the service chiefs that they would not salute anybody else but Mugabe ought to be understood against the background of an elite that is being well-taken care off. Should the MDC be allowed to come to power, it would certainly disturb it in its accumulation project. The predatory civilian-military coalition helped to prevent a possible MDC takeover. The ageing dictator was pleased and went out of his way to reward his loyal client. From then on, critics observed increased "militarisation" of major organs of the state through deployment of top military officers into the political economy of the country, in government ministries and departments, parastatals, and commissions (The Zimbabwe

Institute, 2008:14). The securocrats were becoming increasingly dominant around Mugabe and pervading “virtually every aspect of the state’s purview and oversight, including monetary and foreign policy, the media and even organisations in civil society” (Mandaza 2007:12). Gordon Moyo (2016:352) notes that the “politicisation of the military” went hand-in-hand with the “militarisation of state institutions.” Bratton (2014:81) observes that in 2008 there were 44 securocrats serving as cabinet ministers (4), permanent secretaries or directors (7), ambassadors (4), parliamentarians (7), and managers or board members of parastatals (22). This led to the security sector literally taking over the formulation and implementation of economic policy. The Economist Intelligence Unit (June 2007) reported that the day-to-day running of the country was increasingly carried out by the National Security Council, a body of top securocrats and the central bank governor established in 2005 to oversee economic and food security matters, rather than the cabinet.

The civilian cabinet, line ministries, parliament and the local authorities were being side-lined in key decision-making processes. They were reduced to rubber-stamping policies generated in the barracks. Critics labelled the Joint Operations Command (JOC) a “kitchen cabinet” because of its key role in policy formulation (Shumba 2018:6). In actual fact, the JOC and the National Security Council had become the *de facto* cabinet (Shumba 2018:51). In a letter to Mugabe in 2005, Tsvangirai alleged that “the country has witnessed a *de facto coup d’état* and is now effectively run by a military junta.” Tsvangirai also accused Mugabe of creating “a civil-military junta, which acts as an illegal bulwark against democratic political opposition in general.” Bratton and Masunungure (2011:v) estimate that the politico-military cabal that has been running the state consists of slightly over 200 military and civilian leaders. The security sector had become a key element of the predatory state-party-military alliance. For Bratton and Masunungure (2011:31), it was clear that the coalition was tilted in favour of the securocrats as reflected in the use of military-style “operations” to implement government policy decisions - Operation *Murambatsvina*, Operation *Garikai*, Operation *Chikorokoza Chapera*, Operation *Mavhoterapapi*, Operation Reduce Prices, among many others. Every intervention of the state became an “operation”. Indeed the very fact that the military was to solve the badly handled succession dispute in ZANU PF through a *coup d’état*, code-named *Operation Restore Legacy*, that swept Mugabe from power, shows the extent to which it had become the dominant power factor in the civilian-military diarchy. The faction of the politico-military elite that was led by the ZDF Commander Chiwenga won the day.

The military became omnipresent in the economic, political, public and social spheres in the country. Gordon Moyo (2016) calls this presence of the military in the country's political economy "military commercialism". He describes this as the involvement of military officers in state enterprises and parastatals (SEPs), and as owners, managers, and stakeholders of enterprises that generate financial resources or goods directly benefiting the military, the ruling party and top securocrats (Moyo 2016:354). The first category of military commercialism is the military-industrial complex, as represented by the ZDI, which is thought to control and manage a huge non-defence business empire that consists of various entities and joint ventures, including OSLEG, Sicebo and Sino Zimbabwe that have interests throughout the economy and competing with private capital (Moyo 2016:357). Military commercialism is known to involve "secret budgets" which are beyond government control and which are used for hidden and extra-legal activities. The revenue generated from these secretive military ventures has not been handed over to treasury as the Chiadzwa issue can testify.

Military commercialism also involves the deployment of securocrats to SEPs and other civilian bodies as directors, managers, and labourers. Senior military officials were deployed to SEPs to reward them financially and appease them politically. Knox Chitiyo and Martin Rupiya (2005:360) observe what they term "civilianisation" of the army high command. This is an aspect of the militarisation of politics in which top military commanders, when retiring from active service, are deployed to top positions in civilian institutions, such as SEPs, or are put forward as electoral candidates. Securocrats have been deployed in electoral bodies such as the Delimitation Commission and Zimbabwe Electoral Commission. They became "electoral-smiths," specialising in manipulating the electoral processes on behalf of their patron (Moyo 2014:75). Linked to this has been the increased presence of former high-ranking securocrats in parliament. Scores of ZANU PF MPs came from the security sector. Moyo (2014:76) observes that in 2014, 16 of the 21 members on the Parliamentary portfolio committee on Defence, Home Affairs, and Security were war veterans and former securocrats.

The majority of the country's SEPs are either led by, or have top securocrats occupying high positions. The deployments were intended not only to ensure control over state apparatuses for political leverage, but also to serve as a form of reward to senior serving and retired

security sector officers for their loyalty (Shumba 2018:46). Bratton and Masunungure (2011:iv) add that even the central bank under Gideon Gono was captured to such an extent that it became a “slush fund” for the politico-military elite. SEPs have become the most lucrative cows and conveyor belts, operating as fiefdoms for accumulation of personal riches by top security personnel. The revenue from the SEPs that are controlled and managed by security sector elites goes directly to the individual securocrats at the expense of the starving citizens. This is why the MDC often complained during the inclusive government that the politico-military oligarchy was frustrating efforts to reform SEPs. They could not allow reform of their feeding troughs. That way, the securocrats secured political power and financial autonomy independent of civilian government resources. Far from living up to the initial expectation of cushioning the poor by keeping prices low, SEPs were running massive losses, which in June 2017 were in excess of US\$340 million or 2.1% of GDP (*Newsday* 24 June 2017). SEPs were run with very little, if any, oversight from relevant government departments. They became an avenue for looting and plunder by the ruling predatory politico-military diarchy. The majority of them were stripped of their assets and run down so severely that they needed huge bailouts from central government to keep their doors open.

In light of the post-2000 skills flight due to a collapsing economy, military personnel were deployed to identified SEPs and ministries to provide labour. The dissatisfaction of the rank-and-file soldiers was very high and the possibility of mutiny even higher. They would continue to receive their military salaries and also receive a second salary from the civilian job. In 2005, GMB reportedly absorbed 4 000 soldiers as part of Operation *Maguta*, while the NRZ had more than 2 000 of them (Moyo 2016:361). Thousands of ghost workers have been identified in payroll and skills audits of SEPs and municipalities during the 2000s. Critics alleged that these are members of the security cluster who had been seconded to the civil service for additional income.

### **7.6.5 Degrees in violence**

With the FTLRP, began the era of unrestrained state-sanctioned violence. Against the backdrop of a beleaguered state, low transparency and the pervasive influence of securocrats, the post-2000 period saw the institutionalisation of elite-organised violence at the centre of Zimbabwe’s political economy, which would prove decisive in sustaining the politico-military ruling coalition (Saunders 2011:128). ZANU PF responded to the MDC threat with

ruthless violence aimed at crushing the movement ahead of elections. Murder, torture, rape, kidnapping, disappearances and property destruction became a defining feature of the Zimbabwean political landscape. Violence became the state's favoured way of dealing with its citizens. From rural areas, the violence spilled onto the broader political terrain. It would soon be legalised and legitimated by a host of repressive legislation targeting, among others, freedoms of expression and association, electoral participation and citizenship. The most heinous human rights violations and contempt for the masses shown by the power elite unseen since *Gukurahundi* were all ideologically justified in Mugabe's form of African nationalism. ZANU PF used extreme brutality as a strategy to deal with its opponents all in defence of the gains of the war of liberation. The anti-colonial rhetoric was used to justify colonial-style repression. The "other" was no longer viewed as a human being but as a member of some abstract "enemy" category. Brutality was thus accepted, even celebrated. The nationalism that was supposed to restore the humanity and dignity of African people degenerated into a dehumanising ideology that degraded Africans with the same kind of depersonalising stereotypes used by their colonial masters (van Vuuren 2005:23).

At the centre of this violence were the recently rewarded war veterans and the Border Gezi youth militia taking instructions from high-ranking military officials posted in districts throughout the country. Several thousands of unemployed youth were recruited under the pretext that they were to be trained in patriotism and in the history of the liberation struggle. Media reports revealed, however, that they were trained in tactics of torture and violence (Makumbe 2006:26). Together with the war veterans, the notorious youth militia became the foot soldiers of the party, fishing out "enemies of the people" for torture and political "re-education". They set up bases in both rural and urban areas for a campaign of terror and violence. Large parts of the country, especially traditional ZANU PF strongholds, were declared no-go areas for the opposition and civil society organisations. A ZANU PF party card became the difference between life and death. Party youth militia and war veterans set up roadblocks on highways demanding party cards from passengers. Those found without or with expired cards were not allowed to proceed with their journey, or were tortured. Newspapers alleged to be aligned to the opposition, such as *The Daily News*, were banned in the Mashonaland provinces and one would be tortured if found in possession of a "wrong" newspaper. Newspaper vendors attempting to sell them in these areas were attacked. The occupied farms were turned into bases where opposition sympathisers, among them former

farm workers, teachers and nurses, among the rural middle class were tortured and intimidated. The war veterans and the youth militia also held all-night rallies (*pungwes*) in various communities where massive political “re-education exercises” on the syllabus of “sovereignty and national pride” were carried out (Kamete 2002:36).

Opposition candidates and supporters were subjected to all forms of harassment and intimidation. Very often, the police did not investigate reported cases especially if they were against MDC supporters. On the contrary, they were heavy-handed in dealing with complains against the MDC supporters. The partisan police force often refused the MDC permission to hold campaign rallies or public meetings or broke them up. Opposition officials and supporters were frequently detained on spurious charges. Tsvangirai and two of his top officials were charged with treason just months before the 2002 presidential election for “attempting to remove Mugabe from power unconstitutionally”. Because the police could not assist them, many MDC supporters were forced to flee their homes to seek refuge in urban areas. The Zimbabwe Election Support Network (ZESN 2000:8) reported that high levels of violence, intolerance and intimidation marked the period leading to the 2000 parliamentary elections, claiming that pre-poll political violence claimed 31 lives and caused over 500 serious injuries. More than 6 000 people were displaced from their rural homes (Makumbe 2003:36). Amani Trust documented 27 633 victims of human rights violations and 20 853 victims displaced by violence between January and October 2001 (Bond and Manyanya 2003:179). Schools were closed in some rural areas and learners spent months without going to school because teachers had fled for safety. Makumbe (2006:58) observed that in Masvingo Province thirty-five schools were closed in 2002. Sachikonye (2003:237) observed that around 100 000 primary school children lost their education on closure of the schools in the same year. Between 2000 and 2003, human rights organisations recorded over half a million cases of gross human rights violations including murder, abduction, arson, rape and torture. Makumbe (2003:38) observed the displacement of more than 70 000 people before, during and after the 2002 elections. Dansereau (2005:18) estimates that 100 people, mostly MDC supporters, were killed between the 2000 and 2002 elections.

The war veterans intensified their war mantra, often threatening to go back to the bush and wage a war should the MDC win. Human rights organisations reported that the army was beating up people in towns and cities especially patrons in beer halls and night clubs for

having “voted wrongly”. Just weeks before the 2002 presidential elections, ZDF Commander, General Zvinvashe, flanked by the chiefs of staff (army, police, intelligence, air force and prison service) warned that they would not salute a presidential candidate without liberation war credentials. This was viewed as a threat directed at Tsvangirai, who because he did not participate in the 1970s war, was unacceptable to them if elected. The experience of torture and pain of the liberation struggle was for the executive-military alliance an insurance policy against present and future power swings. It became the “rite of passage” without which one would not land the position of President.

The worst form of violence was to be seen after Mugabe lost the March 2008 election to Tsvangirai. The rumour mill in Harare had it that Mugabe was prepared to accept defeat and step down, but the JOC, headed by Minister Mnangagwa, and composed of the top securocrats, urged him to hang on (Southall Unpublished 23). The JOC, in partnership with the youth militia and war veterans, then took over ZANU PF’s campaign for the run-off perfecting the terror of the previous campaigns through *Operation Mavhoterapapi*? (Who did you vote for?) and embarking on a systematic programme of retributive violence in response to the defeat. They inflicted upon the electorate the worst violence seen since the *Gukurahundi* genocide. The sheer scale of the terror and brutality put Mugabe firmly in a league with some of the world’s worst tyrannies (Partnership Africa Canada [PAC] March 2009:2). At least 200 people were murdered, thousands tortured and around 200 000 displaced (PAC March 2009:23). The worst atrocities happened in the former ZANU PF strongholds of Mashonaland which had apparently defected to Tsvangirai in the March elections. Urban areas were not spared, with Harare getting its fair share of horrible atrocities. Doctors in Harare reported that in the six weeks between 1 April and 16 May, they had treated 1 600 victims of torture (Solidarity Peace Trust [SPT] 2008:7). The Zimbabwe Association of Doctors for Human Rights (ZADHR) noted that the commonest perpetrators of the violence by far were the uniformed forces, adding that, “the current violence is dramatically more intensive and unrestrained” and “the level of brutality and callousness exhibited by the perpetrators is unprecedented” (ZADHR 23 April 2008). In the same statement, they observed that a Harare hospital had over the previous week treated an average of 23 victims of torture per day. Just days before the run-off, Tsvangirai pulled out citing massive violence.

Election observers have criticised the conduct of every election since 2000 on grounds of extreme violence. For example, ZESN (2000:9) concluded that because of the situation before, during and after the 2000 elections, it was not possible to declare the elections free and fair. The elections were also castigated by the Western observer missions, which included the EU and the Commonwealth. Archbishop Desmond Tutu condemned the human rights violations and electoral abuses of the 2002 elections adding, “If we had a similar situation in 1994, we would have declared the election invalid” (*Die Burger*, 17 December 2003). The Southern African Development Community (SADC) Parliamentary Forum Observer Mission (PFOM 2002:5) concluded in its report: “The climate of insecurity obtaining in Zimbabwe since the 2000 parliamentary elections was such that the electoral process could not be said to adequately comply with the *Norms and Standards for Elections* in the SADC region. What is most significant is that the PFOM did not just witness violence, but that “its mission members were themselves targets of an orchestrated attack 10 kilometres out of Chinhoyi on 24 February” (PFOM 2002:3). Mugabe’s victory in the 2008 election was rejected by the opposition and the international community, including the usually compliant AU and SADC.

The election results were rejected, not just because of the brutality of the regime but also because they were conducted in a manner that was methodically designed to ensure a ZANU PF victory. The politics of incumbency ensured that the ruling party manipulated elections in its favour. There was massive abuse of electoral processes by the state, including vote rigging on a huge scale. ZANU PF was in charge of the voters’ role which critics allege was outdated. Civil society groups and the opposition alleged that as many as a quarter of the names on the voter’s roll were either fictitious, duplicated or those of dead people. The Delimitation Commission was accused of gerrymandering in drawing up of some urban constituencies and of not utilising accurate demographic figures in determining constituency boundaries (Makumbe 2006:52). The distribution of polling stations across the constituencies was tilted in favour of rural areas, ZANU PF strongholds, to the disadvantage of the urban electorate. The state-controlled ZBC, which had a monopoly of the airwaves, severely restricted the appearances of MDC candidates on both radio and television and the little access the opposition received was largely negative. In contrast, ZANU PF candidates were given hours of air time each time they held campaign rallies. Added to this were the draconian pieces of legislation, such as the Public Order and Security Act (POSA) and the Jonathan Moyo-



sponsored Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) that restricted free speech and regular political activities ahead of crucial elections. Given the way ZANU PF has manipulated the elections, most independent observers are convinced that the MDC likely won all the national elections since 2000 (Saunders 2011:127).

The state-sponsored violence was not limited to election time. As noted already, the securocrats had virtually taken charge of the country and any government intervention was to be done by the military, and so became a military operation. One such operation was *Murambatsvina* (clear the rubbish). ZANU PF never forgave the residents of major cities, particularly Harare, for their ingratitude and for humiliating the party by voting for the MDC in the previous elections. They came to be dismissed as “totemless” and as “filth” that needed a clean-up operation. On 19 May 2005, with little or no warning, the government embarked on an operation of evictions and demolitions to “restore order and sanity” throughout the country’s cities carried out by the police and the army. The operation began with the destruction of flea markets and informal trading shops in Harare. It moved to the high-density suburbs and informal settlements before spreading to other cities and major towns around the country. Zimbabweans called it “Operation Tsunami” because of its sheer speed and ferocity. Human Rights Watch [HRW] (September 2005) reported that over fifty towns and neighbourhoods were affected by the evictions and demolitions. In a scathing report after the fact-finding mission, UN Special Envoy on Human Settlements, Anna Kajumulo Tibaijuka, said 700 000 people in urban areas across the country lost their homes, their source of livelihood or both (Tibaijuka 2005:7). She reported that the operation was carried out in “an indiscriminate and unjustified manner, with indifference to human suffering, and with disregard to several provisions of national and international legal frameworks” (Tibaijuka 2005:25). She noted that it was a horrendous undertaking based on colonial-era laws and policies that were used to segregate and exclude blacks. She witnessed police demolishing houses in one township and witnessed women and children sleeping in the open in the cold July winter. The operation was unprecedented in the region in terms of the sheer numbers of people affected and the extent of economic resources destroyed, and represented a “peak of military authoritarianism” (Southall Unpublished 22). The opposition and civil society immediately dismissed the operation as a smokescreen for motives that had little to do with addressing the problem of informal structures and restoring order within urban areas. For them it was punishment for having voted wrongly. Southall (Unpublished 22) argues that its

motivations undoubtedly included a desire to smash urban protest and support for the MDC. Bill H. Kinsey (2010:339) argues that *Murambatsvina* shared with the FTLRP the goals of intimidation, punishment, displacement and disenfranchisement. Having lost their jobs due to company closures, they now found themselves homeless as the bulldozers razed their homes to the ground. A great number hopped from place to place until they were invited to Chiadzwa, near the eastern border city of Mutare, expecting to finally settle down, dig the precious stones from the ground and start their lives afresh. But as fate would have it, the worst was yet to come.

#### **7.6.6 Blood diamonds and the predatory politico-military elite**

With the so-called Third *Chimurenga*, Zimbabwe entered “a zone of indistinction” - a space “where the frontiers between the rule of law and chaos disappear, decisions about life and death become entirely arbitrary, and everything becomes possible (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:1149). With this descent into chaos, the nation plunged into a full-blown kleptocratic predatory dictatorship. It became a *de facto* mafia-style lawless kleptocracy. With virtually no oversight from anybody, predation and primitive accumulation by the parasitic elite vultures spiralled out of control and reached unprecedented levels. Shumba (2018:169) observes that this period marks a major turning point of accumulation into outright predation. The state had been captured by a corrupt, self-seeking authoritarian politico-military elite with a gregarious impulse for accumulation. According to Saunders (2011:129), elite accumulation in the 2000s went off-grid: out of reach of transparent regulation by government; primarily benefiting a small rapacious cabal and frequently, overlapping with parallel markets and criminal networks. He observes that while earlier forms of accumulation were relatively openly structured and driven by state-based policy making, from the 2000s, it was often hidden behind a veil of secrecy and operating on the edges of the state (Saunders 2011:129). Whereas earlier the state had been employed to promote accumulation, from 2000 onwards, the state appeared to nurture the consolidation of criminality under the direction of politico-military interests (Saunders 2011:131). This accumulation was not at all directed towards increased production, or towards contributing to industrialisation and the consequent economic growth and employment creation. The opaque climate of the period provided the politico-military elite with lucrative opportunities to steal and plunder national resources virtually unhindered. Chiadzwa was one such example.

In the midst of a worsening economic crisis, the ancestors seemed to have smiled on the land when one of the largest diamond discoveries of recent times was made at Chiadzwa, near the eastern border city of Mutare in 2006. Within a few years, Zimbabwe was the world's fourth largest producer of the gems by volume, exceeded only by Russia, DRC, and Botswana, offering the long-suffering economy a rare chance of revitalisation (Global Witness September 2017:13). When news of the discovery spread throughout the country, impoverished Zimbabweans desperate to eke a living, flocked to Chiadzwa in their tens of thousands, and by December an estimated 35 000 people from all over the country had descended on the area (Global Witness September 2017:10). From the moment of the discovery of diamonds, Chiadzwa became a terrain of contestation. Various class interests - from the various arms of the state to mining capital, and from informal traders to artisanal miners - converged aiming to exploit the precious gems (Nyamunda and Mukwambo 2012:148). Political, security and business elites took advantage of the unregulated free-for-all situation to establish illicit smuggling networks in an "underground economy" to trade in diamonds. Aware of the windfall that would come from Chiadzwa, security forces were brought to the area to kick out artisanal miners on the ground that diamonds were a national resource that should be exploited by formal mining operations (Nyamunda and Mukwambo 2012 148).

Chiadzwa became heavily militarised. The whole region was declared a no-go area to outsiders. From November 2006, the government launched a series of military-style operations (Operation *Chikorokoza chapera*, Operation *Hakudzokwi*) to rid the area of illegal miners. These were brutal crackdown operations led by the security forces in which grave human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, beatings, torture, rape, forced labour, and child labour were committed (HRW 2009:28). Eye-witnesses narrated how Chiadzwa resembled "a war zone in which soldiers killed people like flies" (HRW 2009:31). The dead bodies were buried in mass graves because they could not be positively identified (HRW 2009:28). Hospitals reported turning away military trucks full of bodies because there was no space for them in the mortuaries. Medical staff at one hospital said soldiers had brought in 107 bodies from Marange between 1 and 12 November (HRW 2009:32). Women living on the diamond fields narrated how they were sexually abused by the security forces. Other female miners said officers would gamble over women and the winner would rape his "prize" (HRW 2009:27). HRW also reported widespread torture and beatings of miners and diamond

dealers at the hands of soldiers. By January 2009, the diamond fields resembled a military base.

In March 2009, the Kimberley Process [KP] Chairperson (Bernhard Esau 2009) issued a statement expressing “growing concerns” at the violence and urged authorities to bring it to an end. In June, the KP Review Mission saw first-hand military involvement in mining, and suggested a six month withdrawal of Zimbabwe from the KP. Tinashe Nyamunda and Patience Mukwambo (2012:164) observe that the militarisation of Chiadzwa coincided with the establishment of the Government of National Unity (GNU), and they suggest that it is most likely that ZANU PF wanted to establish effective control of the sector beforehand, in order to forestall any MDC interference. The MDC as partner in government was helpless to bring an end to the abuses, as was the KP.

Rich in the alluvial germ as the area was, only a tiny fraction of the proceeds made its way into treasury. Gono repeatedly said that huge volumes of revenue were being lost to smugglers. In February 2007 he said the country was losing between US\$40 million and US\$50 million per week through the smuggling of precious minerals and in October of the following year, he alleged that more than 500 illegal diamond syndicates were operating in Manicaland (PAC March 2009:6). Successive budget statements also showed relatively little income from Chiadzwa. Experts estimated that the country could have realised as much as US\$1.2 billion per month from diamond sales, enough to alleviate the country’s serious economic challenges (PAC March 2009:6). In March 2016, Mugabe announced that only US\$2 billion of an anticipated US\$15 billion was received from Chiadzwa claiming that private companies robbed the country (PAC March 2009:11). Global Witness (September 2017:16) observed a culture of secrecy and a lack of transparency at all levels in the diamond mining sector and argued that it is this secrecy that was critical to sustaining corruption, looting and the disappearance of billions of dollars from Chiadzwa.

According to Global Witness (September 2017:7), the tale of Zimbabwe’s disappearing diamond wealth is not a story of a fragile developing economy looted by greedy venture capitalists and unscrupulous multinationals but is the story of “an inside job”. The mining of the diamonds was under the control of the country’s security forces and political elites. Research into the three companies digging diamonds at Chiadzwa, namely, Kusena Diamonds, Anjin, and Jinan, revealed their links with the dreaded and highly partisan CIO

and the military (Global Witness September 2017:20). In an investigation, Global Witness discovered that Kusena, thought to be owned by the state, was actually set up by the CIO to secure a secret off-the books source of financing (Global Witness September 2017:7) of the organisation and its top brass. 40% of Anjin is owned by the ZDI. Several of Anjin's directors are drawn from the military and police. Jinan was effectively run as an extension of Anjin. Investigations indicated that the two shared both equipment and staff when operating in neighbouring concessions (Global Witness September 2017:33). For all intents and purposes, the two appear to have been structured differently but operated as one company. Global Witness concluded that the extremely close relationship between the two companies suggests a clear risk of Jinan's assets benefiting also Anjin, and so the ZDI (Global Witness September 2017:33).

Through these links, the CIO and military secured themselves a lucrative source of off-budget financing from diamonds which gave the highly partisan and oppressive institutions the independence that allowed them to operate beyond the oversight of Parliament. Capturing the precious gems gave the securocrats a dangerous economic incentive to preserve the Mugabe regime in power. The Council of EU Foreign Ministers expressed concern over the growing trade in illicit diamonds that provide financial support to the Mugabe regime (PAC March 2009:9). The Chiadzwa diamonds, concluded PAC (March 2009:2),

are no longer clean because they bear the blood of Zimbabweans, shot down by their own government and they are produced from mines that benefit political and military gangsters, and are smuggled out of the country by the bucketload.

The diamond discovery of this magnitude could have provided a huge boost to the country's ailing economy but they only benefitted a phalanx of the security, political and economic elites. WikiLeaks leaked a US Diplomatic cable which reports how high-ranking government officials and their clients were lining their pockets through selling undocumented diamonds to foreign buyers who smuggle them out of the country (Global Witness September 2017:36). Chiadzwa is a good example of the convergence of political, security and business interests in opaque and powerful networks and related to this is the entrenchment of narrowed elitist securitised power in the state and economy (Saunders 2011:129). It is an example of the depth and extent of political-security-criminal linkages as well as the efficiency with which state power and illegal violence have been used in ever growing intensity to achieve the

coalition's objectives. The once promising diamond find failed to benefit the masses. Instead of the precious gems being a blessing to the Zimbabwean masses, they became a resource curse.

### **7.6.7 Our turn to eat**

The politico-military diarchy is reported to have facilitated massive economic extraction in the chaotic environment during and after 2000. Typical of this petit bourgeoisie, most of the proceeds were spent on building mansions comparable to villas in western holiday resorts. Former Reserve Bank Governor and Mugabe confidante, Gono, owns a house in a leafy suburb of Harare sitting on 4 654 square metres with 47 *en suite* bedrooms, a swimming pool, a gym, a mini-theatre, and landscaped gardens (PAC March 2009:6). He also received multiple farms during the FTLRP. In 2013, he gave President Mugabe 89 herd of cattle, one for each of his years, as a birthday present and promised to make them ninety the following year (*Nehanda Radio*, 8 December 2013). Towards the end of that year, Gono gave his daughter a mansion in the posh Borrowdale Brooke suburb as a wedding gift (*Nehanda Radio*, 8 December 2013). In 2017, he bought a majority shareholding in one of the country's elite private schools (*Financial Gazette*, 10 August 2017). In its list of the 50 richest Zimbabweans in 2015, a local research firm put Gono at number 32 (*Nehanda Radio*, 24 May 2015). Mugabe's last local government minister, Saviour Kasukuwere, whose interests in energy and banking were not doing very well, allegedly built a 50 bedroom house which was guarded by the army. Obert Mpofu, who presided over the looting of Chiadzwa diamonds as mines minister, bought the struggling Zimbabwe Allied Banking Group, an acquisition that raised a lot of public interest. He became the face of opulence in Zimbabwe, with some calling him the "minister with a diamond touch." He has been on a buying spree, purchasing properties in Bulawayo, Victoria Falls, and Harare, including one of the tallest buildings in Bulawayo. Mpofu built a lavish house in his rural home where his neighbours live in mud and stick huts.

Mugabe's co-Vice-President, Phelekezela Mphoko, gained notoriety for staying in the elite Rainbow Towers Hotel for two years, refusing to move into the three houses offered to him by government, arguing that they were not befitting for someone of the Vice-President's stature. His hotel bill cost the tax payer about half a million dollars. He was rumoured to have built his own villa in Bulawayo after he finally left the hotel. Emmerson Mnangagwa was

also rumoured to have become extremely wealthy from the Congo diamonds. In fact, at one time, he was alleged to be the richest Zimbabwean. It is with former local government minister, Ignatius Chombo, that one gets insight into how ZANU PF corruption and plunder have enriched the political elite. In an acrimonious property-sharing row with his former wife, it was revealed that he owned no less than a hundred houses, as well as residential stands, in addition to about fifteen luxury vehicles, dozens of tractors and trucks, as well as farm equipment (*Nehanda Radio*, 5 November 2010).

Mugabe was widely believed to have diverted state jobs and contracts to his nephews and nieces and to a network of extended families belonging to his Gushungo clan (*The Zimbabwean*, 19 July 2007). Most well-known are his sister, Sabina, and her children. Sabina's eldest son, Innocent Mugabe, was director of the CIO. The most prominent of her sons, Leo, was one time Member of Parliament, then Chairperson of the Zimbabwe Football Association (ZIFA) and owner of Integrated Engineering Group, a company that benefitted immensely from state contracts. Sabina's third son, Patrick Zhuwawo was appointed Deputy Minister and then elevated to minister by his uncle, President Mugabe. Chiyangwa, a distant relative of Mugabe, became rich allegedly because of this relationship. According to Yamamoto (2008), since the late 1990s, Mugabe was a godfather of criminal bands of a political mafia elite that extensively fuelled network-type corruption. This, he argues, is because no senior party or government official implicated in corruption scandals has ever been prosecuted and even those that he has demoted after scandals bounce back after a few years, even occupying higher positions. Mugabe leased the allegiance of his cabal by allowing it to plunder and loot national resources.

Accumulation was not limited to wealth but also included acquisitions that give social status. High-ranking ZANU PF officials and military elites jostled to acquire degrees including doctorates in various disciplines. In Zimbabwe, being educated adds to one's social status. First Lady Grace Mugabe, Deputy President Mujuru, General Chiwenga and Obert Mpofu, acquired doctorates. Others also graduated with various Master and Bachelor's degrees. The one acquisition that raised eyebrows the most was the doctorate awarded to Grace Mugabe reportedly within two months of registration for the programme. Media reports indicated that she might not have had a university degree at all because she had been deregistered at the University of London due where she was doing a bachelor's degree in English, for bad

performance in the 1990s (*The Zimbabwean*, 14 July 2014). Critics saw this as part of the primitive accumulation drive where because of her status she could get whatever she so wished. They also argue that acquiring a doctorate was a way to position her firmly on her way to succeed her husband as President. After Mugabe was swept from power, the Vice Chancellor of the University that awarded her the qualification was arrested for abuse of office (*The Herald*, 17 February 2018).

### **7.6.8 Looking East**

In response to the chaotic FTLRP and ZANU PF crackdown on the opposition, the US and her allies imposed "smart" sanctions on Mugabe and his ruling politico-military elite, including travel bans and a freezing of their assets in those countries. The sanctions were later extended to some parastatals and companies owned by the military. Zimbabwe was also suspended from the Commonwealth after the 2002 elections. In 2002, the IMF stopped lending to Zimbabwe because of its failure to service the massive debt that it already owed. The tiny southern African country became an international pariah. Investors ran away with their money. The prevailing lawlessness was reported widely in the international media, and tourists stopped visiting the country, depriving treasury of the much-needed foreign exchange. Business confidence nose-dived to an all-time low.

Feeling the heat, Mugabe intensified his anti-Western rhetoric, skilfully placing the Zimbabwean crisis at the centre of a larger anti-imperialist and Pan-African pedestal. He gave it the complexion of Africa versus the West conflict. The ZANU PF propaganda machinery portrayed him as an innocent victim of Western hegemonic imperialism that is intolerant to any leader from the developing world who does not toe the line, a language that had resonance on the continent and the post-colonial developing world. He used whatever platform afforded him to preach his anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist gospel and to cry victim. According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:244), Mugabe portrayed himself as a tormented self-righteous messiah, whose life was an instance of a mythopoetic narrative of suffering and fighting for the people. He presented himself as a Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53) who is offering himself to pay for the sins of the developing world. Permeating his many speeches is "a cult of victimisation" and repetition of the story of the "native condition" (Achile Mbembe, cited in Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:267). Increasingly, he was reading global history as a series of conspiracies aimed at re-colonising his country and removing him from power



(Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:268). His world had increasingly become reduced to the dualism of the West as the oppressor and Africa as the victim. Unsurprisingly, many African leaders bought Mugabe's narrative that there is a vindictive white racist conspiracy to recolonise Zimbabwe and turn it into Rhodesia again. According to the Helen Suzman Foundation (HSF 2013), God-fathers of ruling liberation movements on the continent believe they are locked in an endless battle against Western imperialism. Supporting ZANU PF was no longer just a matter of solidarity but of fundamental self-interest because Mugabe's struggle to retain power became a struggle for their own survival too (HSF 2013). They agreed with him that the suffering of the Zimbabweans was caused by sanctions imposed by the Western imperialist countries as punishment for standing up to them by addressing an obvious historical injustice and applauded his revolutionary consistence and a commitment to fighting neo-colonialism. Thus, instead of breaking his hold on power, the sanctions actually boosted his profile on the continent, as African leaders chose to ignore his racism, the brutality of his regime and his desperation to cling to power, and sought to portray him as an anti-imperialist champion.

With the Western world arrayed against him, Mugabe developed what he termed the "Look-East" policy. He courted Asian countries, such as Malaysia, Singapore, and most importantly, China. He reasoned that these countries trade on "equal terms" with African countries, and their loan and aid guarantees come with no conditionalities regarding political or economic reforms (Youde 2007:11). Zimbabwe entered into numerous bi-lateral agreements with China which took advantage of this relationship to gain a foothold in the country. The Look East policy should be understood within the context of Mugabe's anti-Western, anti-imperialist narrative. Jeremy Youde (2007:14) argues that the policy represents an attempt by Mugabe to trade on his image as a freedom fighter, the political and economic liberator of his country. By looking East, Mugabe was trying to prove to the West that it could not push him around. He was telling the world that Asia was now the land of opportunity and telling the West that its time of dominance was over (Youde 2007:13). In spite of the rhetoric, the Look East policy did not succeed in arresting the economic decay. If anything, there was growing concern that the flood of cheap Chinese goods into the country was threatening the very few remaining jobs and industries, and that Chinese goods that flood stores and roadside stalls were of poor quality.

Thus, while the government was making citizens believe that Zimbabwe could do without the West since it had found new friends from the East, citizens were not convinced. They believed that by emphasising sanctions, ZANU PF was taking away its responsibility for the crisis. If anything, sanctions cannot adequately account for the crisis of an economy that can no longer export because its agricultural sector has all but collapsed while its mining sector has been severely plundered by a parasitic elite. However, we doubt if it was out of concern for human rights and democracy in Zimbabwe that Western powers punished Mugabe with sanctions. Their position towards other countries, especially from the developing world is determined by whether or not a country accepts the dictates of imperialism and creates a conducive environment for their corporations to exploit its resources (Martorell 2002). In the immediate post-independence period, Mugabe was a darling of the West because he had reconciled with whites and created conditions for capitalism to flourish. He committed grave human rights violations during *Gukurahundi* that make Operation *Mavhoterapapi* look like a church circus. The West kept supporting him because he was preserving its interests. It is when he started to step out of the script written in Washington and London by threatening the interests of white farmers - their kith and kin - that he became rogue (Martorell 2002) and they had to punish him. Meanwhile, the economy was imploding.

### **7.6.9 Hyperinflation**

Economic indicators showed an economy in serious trouble. The cumulative decline of real GDP growth was 50% between 2000 and 2008 while real per capita income fell from US\$644 in 1990 to US\$338 in 2008 (Mlambo, 2017:10). The three pillars which had buttressed the country's economy - agriculture, mining and manufacturing - suffered greatly, resulting in the near collapse of each of them. Agricultural output plummeted. Mining contracted by a cumulative of 81% during 1999-2008, while the manufacturing sector experienced a cumulative decline of 92% during the same period (AfDB 2011:5). Manufacturing's share of GDP was half of its early 1990s value. Official foreign exchange inflows declined from US\$18.5 million in September 2002 to US\$ 500 000 in December of the same year (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:373). In 2002 external debt stood at US\$6.6 billion while domestic debt was said to be about Z\$791 quadrillion by mid-2008 (p. 373). AfDB (2011:5) notes that more than two thirds of the foreign debt was arrears to the country's creditors. Foreign direct investment declined from US\$440 million in 1997 to a mere \$50 million in 2006. (Raftopoulos and Phimister 2003:373). Zimbabwe acquired the dubious distinction of

being the world's fastest-shrinking economy outside of a war zone, contracting by as much as 60% in 2000-2006 (Saunders 2011:127). Former United States Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Susan Rice, listed Zimbabwe among failing or failed states such as Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia and Afghanistan (Pierson 2004:168).

The country was bankrupt, and by mid-2005 re-payment arrears amounted to US\$295 million to the IMF and more than US\$1 billion to other lenders (Southall Unpublished 22). The government resorted to printing money to finance public expenditure and quasi-fiscal spending, resulting in inflation climbing from around 55% in 2000 to about 1 300% in 2006, until hyperinflation took over, reaching an official 230% by the end of 2008 (Southall Unpublished 21), making it the first hyperinflation of the 21st century. Official figures certainly understated the situation. The African Development Bank [AfDB] (2011:3) estimates that it stood at 500 000 000 000% (500 billion percent) at the end of 2008, making it the second highest inflation in world history after post-World War I Hungary. Prices of basic foodstuffs were adjusted several times a day. The currency was redenominated three times by removing zeroes because computers could no longer handle them. In 2009, the Reserve Bank issued the Z\$100 000 000 000 000 (Z\$100 trillion) note - the note with the highest number of zeroes of any legal tender in recorded history. After Mugabe's fall, Gono told a weekly newspaper that he resorted to printing money because the government was desperate to prevent a coup by hungry soldiers (*The Standard*, 29 April 2018). Gono also raided foreign currency accounts of individuals, corporates and NGOs. Mutumwa Mawere likened him to a "gangster" acting with the support of the state machinery (Shumba 2018:137). Inevitably, hyperinflation spurred a huge and active foreign currency black market, bringing huge profits to those who accessed it at very low rates. By late 2008, the local currency had been abandoned by the citizens and in February 2009, authorities followed suit and established a multicurrency system.

As the freefall of the economy, continued unabated, the central bank chief was acting as a *de facto* Prime Minister, embarking on a number of quasi-fiscal interventions, such as the Basic Commodities Supply Side Intervention (BACOSSI) and the Farm Mechanisation Programme of 2007. These were to all intents and purposes mechanisms of dispensing patronage to prop up political support. Instead of benefitting the masses, the Farm Mechanisation Programme ended up benefitting those in ZANU PF patronage networks. As opposition leader, Arthur

Mutambara remarked, the Farm Mechanisation Programme was “nothing but a shameless abuse of taxpayers’ money in pursuit of cheap propaganda, while satisfying a few cronies to the detriment of the generality of the people” (*The Zimbabwean*, 13 June 2007). Another patronage-driven move was giving the GMB the sole right to import and distribute maize supplies. This enabled party and government elites to use maize as a tool for dispensing patronage in a country where the majority of the peasants were starving. Reports from rural areas revealed that ZANU PF supporters were prioritised while MDC supporters were denied food aid. Food aid should be viewed in light of the control it gives the governing party over the rural electorate.

Most companies had shut down. Unemployment skyrocketed. A gradual reorientation of the economy was happening which resulted in a new economy which Jeremy L. Jones (2010) calls “*kukiya-kiya* economy”, an economy of “getting by”, an instinctive response to circumstances. The economic hardship stimulated adaptation and inventive strategies for survival. In a *kukiya-kiya* economy, securing a living is a combat with circumstances, and survival is a matter of tenacity and outright force. *Kukiya-kiya* suggests cleverness, dodging, and the exploitation of whatever resources are at hand, all with an eye to self-sustenance (Jones 2010:286). It is an economy that entails a progressive invasion into the mainstream economy of economic styles and tactics formerly relegated to the down-class urban youth (Jones 2010:286). Activities formerly associated with urban social margins such as operating tuck shops, informal furniture-making, roadside trading in foreign currency and basic commodities, as well cross border trading among others, increasingly became the source of livelihood for most of the urban dwellers. Artisanal mining for gold also became fashionable. *Kukiya-kiya* grew from its position on the margins of urban life and bottom of society into the dominant mode of everyday existence, in fact to involve nearly everyone: from urban youth to civil servants to wage labourers, to former farm-workers and the rural poor (Jones 2010:298). Already in November 2000, CZI reported that an estimated 1.7 million people were relying on the informal sector (*The Financial Gazette*, 12 June 2002). According to Mlambo (2017), Zimbabwe had become “a nation of vendors”. It is this economy that Mugabe sought to eliminate with Operation *Murambatsvina*.

Life became a nightmare for the majority of citizens. As early as July 2001, CCZ stated that 74% of the population could not afford basic necessities (Good 2002:16). Wages had fallen to their pre-1980 levels, by 2006. Less than 6% were employed in 2008 (PAC March 2009:1) while the poverty rate was estimated at 70% in 2008, up from 42% in 1995 (AfDB 2011:3). With the majority of the population well beyond the brink of starvation, it is surprising that the economy did not collapse completely. More than half of the population faced severe food shortages. For the majority, there were only two options: either engage in *kukiya-kiya* or migrate. Most professionals (and non-professionals too) voted with their feet by migrating, seeking less troubled waters in which to fish, with the majority of them going to South Africa and Botswana but also to Mozambique, Zambia and Malawi, countries whose economies were far below Zimbabwe's before the crisis. Others went overseas, mostly to the United Kingdom and United States. Conservative estimates indicated that about a million Zimbabweans were living in South Africa by the end of 2007 (e.g. Kramarenko et al, 2010:10). Others estimated that the figure could have been as high as three million by 2010 (Saunders 2011:127). Zimbabweans living outside the country were estimated to be as high as 5 million, a no small number for a country with a small population of approximately 13 million (Mlambo 2017:26). This brain drain severely bled the country's human resources capital. However, it is widely believed that diaspora remittances saved the country from a certain collapse.

Back home, citizens experienced the meltdown through crumbling social services and infrastructure, everyday power cuts, factory closures and a useless national currency. Around 80% of the population lived on less than \$1 a day and 90% were unemployed surviving through *kukiya-kiya*. Citizens faced standards of living far lower than at the time of independence. There was no social services sector to talk about. Civil servants stopped going to work for months after their salaries had become valueless, opting instead to go to the rivers to become artisanal miners or trade in second hand goods. Basic commodities disappeared from the shops. Key infrastructure, particularly the road network, deteriorated rapidly. Abandoned workshops and factories that lined the potholed roads in industrial areas became an eye sore, providing a hide-out for petty criminals and prostitutes. Electricity supply became erratic. Hospital staff could not remember when they last received supplies of medicine. The country's urban water system collapsed, resulting in a horrendous cholera outbreak which claimed an estimated 3 000 lives in 2009 (Kisiangani 2009:5). By the end of

2008, Zimbabwe's once admired health and education sectors were in tatters. PAC (March 2009:1) observes that only 6% of rural schools were open. Life expectancy dropped from 65 years in 1990 to 43 years in 2006 (World Health Organisation [WHO] December 2008:2).

### ***7.7 Inclusive government***

The GNU between ZANU PF and the two MDCs (2009 – 2013) was greeted with a huge sigh of relief by an impoverished citizenry. It helped to stabilise the economy for a while. The decision to abolish the local currency in favour of a multi-currency regime effectively led to the end of hyperinflation. By 2011, growth rate was 10.6%, making Zimbabwe one of the fastest growing economies on earth (Mlambo 2017:11). Basic commodities returned to the shops and civil servants returned to their work stations. Electricity and water provision as well as refuse collection greatly improved. Fuel was available at the pump and transport services returned to normal. The power-sharing arrangement also brought about a significant reduction in politically-motivated tensions and violence in the country and there was talk of re-engagement with the international community after a decade of isolation. However, important the changes brought by the inclusive government were, by and large, it was an elite pact in which the elites from all sides were vying for ministerial positions. Each faction of the elite was focused more on the most lucrative and powerful cabinet posts - defence, home affairs and finance. In the end, the Home Affairs portfolio had two co-ministers. It was too important to lose. Bratton and Masunungure (2011:34) observe that power in the GNU was not shared, but divided because ZANU-PF and the MDCs exercised power separately within largely exclusive, and often competing, zones of authority. Zimbabwe remained one country with two rival governments. The GNU cabinet was just too big. It was meant to ensure that politicians from all parties benefited from government resources. The salaries and perks of the ministers and their deputies left a huge dent in the already-empty fiscus.

The power-sharing arrangement was dogged by disagreements, persistent suspicions and mistrust among the parties. Furthermore, the inclusive government was tilted in favour of ZANU PF. The MDCs were always at a disadvantage against a party that continued to control the coercive arms of the state (Raftopoulos 2013:984). It is not far-fetched to argue that the MDCs were in office but not in power. The arrangement appears to have been most effective in serving the instrumental needs of the ZANU-PF elite. It provided the party with some legitimacy while facilitating its continued access to strategic knobs of state power - including

the defence, police, security, foreign affairs and information ministries, in addition to control over the prosecuting authority and responsibility for strategic resource extraction sectors like mining and agriculture (Saunders 2011:130). These were turned to meet partisan ends. Mugabe continued to treat the partners in government as if they were junior partners. Many in ZANU PF and security forces seemed to want to show at any point that nothing had really changed. Mugabe always appeared unwilling to consider reforms that would weaken his grip on power. Moreover, Western donor nations and multi-lateral finance institutions adopted a “wait-and-see” attitude and were unwilling to offer the government any financial assistance for their mistrust of Mugabe fearing that it would prop him and his party (Kisiangani 2009:1). According to Raftopoulos (2013:971-972), ZANU PF’s strategy was to manipulate and stall the reform process in order to allow it to regroup and reconfigure after the 2008 electoral disaster. The MDCs also struggled to position themselves in a state whose structure was largely built on a ZANU PF template and shaped by the imperatives of its military-economic elite.

Mugabe’s victory in the July 2013 elections stunned many. According to Raftopoulos (2013:985), the unevenness of the playing field, though important cannot, on its own, account for ZANU PF’s landslide victory. He observes the radical changes in the country’s political economy since 2000 which severely weakened the support base of the MDC. Due to de-industrialisation, informalisation of the economy and the migration of the workers out of the country, the trade union movement and the urban middle class that had been the support base of the MDC had been severely depleted and was no longer available in such numbers for political mobilisation. Furthermore, the two MDCs failed to agree on a deal to mount a united front. As a result, ZANU PF capitalised on it and obtained several seats due to a split vote. The MDCs entered the political terrain a lot weaker than in the previous election. The politics of political and civic opposition that emerged in the late 1990s had come to an end (Raftopoulos (2013:986).

The economic recovery of the GNU period was unfortunately short lived. Economic decline resumed. Estimates are that around 90% of Zimbabweans were unemployed by 2015, surviving through *kukiya kiya*, mostly through trading in second-hand clothes and other items. There was no formal employment sector to talk about. *The Standard* (4 November 2013) reported that only 11% of the country’s employed population was in formal

employment. Deindustrialisation was continuing unabated as companies closed due to frequent power cuts and a liquidity crunch. The Confederation of Zimbabwean Industries [CZI] (2014:6) report noted that deindustrialisation had reached catastrophic levels, with dire consequences to the state of the economy. Meanwhile, no one in ZANU PF was talking economics. The party elite was busy trying to undo one another as it became obvious the Mugabe's days both on the throne and on earth were numbered. Yet, the succession topic remained taboo in the party. At every elective congress, Mugabe's hold on the presidency of the party was never debated. It was taken for granted that he would be the party's presidential candidate even for the 2018 elections when he would be 94 years old. Strategies to outdo each other got nasty as one after another of the top contenders got fired from the party. It was the military that solved the succession issue when on Tuesday 14 November 2017, it staged a coup, installing long-time Mugabe lieutenant Mnangagwa as President, ending Mugabe's 37 years of terror. The military that had ensured Mugabe's retention of power was ironically the same military that would knock him out of power. The military had become the king-maker. As had happened on 18 April 1980, the nation was ecstatic.

### ***7.8 Archangel Gabriel***

At the heart of the post-colonial Zimbabwean political economy spanning nearly four decades, has been the figure of Robert Gabriel Mugabe. At the peak of his power, he became a subject of the global media to an extent that there was a virtual journalistic stampede over him. He became the favourite whipping boy of the western media, social media and cartoonists. In the court of global public opinion, he moved from the darling of the world who had served his people with distinction, had been awarded the Africa Prize for 'Leadership for Sustainable End of Hunger' by the US-based Hunger Project and went on to be honoured by her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II, with the rank of an Honorary Knight Grand Cross of the Most Honourable Order of the Bath, in 1994, to amassing a fortune for himself, his family and clients, and presiding over the calculated murder, torture, and starvation of his own people (Norman 2004:16). Scholars also took up "Mugabeism", producing tens of thousands of academic works on the phenomenon, trying to understand and explain how the once disciplined, learned, and a very shrewd politician had become an autocratic ruthless tyrant who rigged elections, trampled over the rule of law, and showed blatant racism and in the process taking his country to the depths of misery (Norman 2004:16). To many people Archangel Gabriel had become like Lucifer, a fallen angel, who had tragically fallen from



being a celebrated revolutionary, the symbol and embodiment of the revolution into a brutal African despot. Indeed Mahmood Mamdani (2009) notes how hard it is to find a figure more reviled in the West than Mugabe.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009:86) traces the deification of the post-nationalist leader to the struggle days. According to him, an important impact of the liberation struggle was the prominence of the nationalist leader within the movement. Mao, Lenin, Stalin, Fidel Castro, Tito and Muammar Gaddafi belong to the same group of nationalist leaders who were literally deified by their people. When he ascended to the helm of the party in 1976, Mugabe advocated total adherence to the party line (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:255). He became a disciplinarian who tolerated no dissent. While still in the bush, party songs and slogans at home increasingly became framed around him. For example, every political address had to start with “Forward with Comrade Robert Gabriel Mugabe” followed by “Forward with ZANU” (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:255). By the time Mugabe arrived home from Mozambique at the end of the war, he had long become a darling of the masses and the central figure in the transition to independence. This glorification of the leader gave rise to a cult of personality. From the time he was installed as Prime Minister, he gradually established himself as central in the power equation. His eloquence, erudition and shrewdness endeared him to the masses who saw him as a messiah who had delivered them from the “Smithian Egypt”. It is not far-fetched to suggest that it is through him that ZANU PF has remained ingrained in the minds of the masses (Sithole and Makumbe 1997:132). What emerged in all this were clear roots and trappings of a personality cult. The nationalist mythology had forged an identification of nation, party, and leader. The Zimbabwean state was slowly becoming a “commandist state” in which Mugabe alone was able to exercise and sustain hegemonic control. According to Mandaza (2007:10), Mugabe became unassailable in the party, making him less and less democratic and more and more autocratic. Mugabe’s official portrait was in every public building. Every city and town had to name one of its main streets after him. Party regalia all had his portrait. It was as if he was omnipresent. He canonised himself into the “soul” and father of the nation, and elevated himself to a mini-god, saint, angel (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2009:349).

With the swallowing up of PF ZAPU and constitutional amendment of 1987, Mugabe quickly moved on to accumulate huge personal power. He declared himself Executive President, making himself Head of state, Head of government and Commander-In-Chief of the defence

forces. That also gave him powers to dissolve parliament and declare martial law and the right to run for an unlimited number of times. He controlled appointments to all senior posts in the civil service, the army, police and parastatals (Meredith 2005:629). Ruling through a vast system of patronage, he gained a virtual stranglehold over the state machinery. One after the other, the civil service, the state media, the security sector and the parastatals were subordinated to his will. The Executive President became increasingly authoritarian and remote. His official and private residences were heavily guarded around the clock. He travelled in huge motorcades, with military personnel armed to the tooth. All traffic had to freeze and give way to his motorcade. Any gesture at the President's motorcade was prohibited by law. Everywhere he went for a rally, he was greeted by huge and excited crowds. The party's foot soldiers ensured that he addressed huge crowds bussed from far and wide.

As one who appointed and disappointed, senior party officials were falling over each other, bootlicking and praise-singing the First Secretary of the revolutionary party. As early as the 1990s, Tony Gara equated Mugabe to Jesus and for that, he was rewarded with a deputy ministerial post. In his old age, party heavyweights jostled to endear themselves to the nonagenarian. In 2011, Minister Webster Shamu branded Mugabe as "cremora", a coffee creamer that is a favourite with most urban Zimbabweans (*Newsday*, 14 October 2017). "The best was yet to come when two years later Shamu told revellers at a musical bash that he would have preferred to be Mugabe's biological son (*Newsday*, 14 October 2017). Not to be outdone, Obert Mpofu always signed off letters to Mugabe as "your ever-obedient son" (*Newsday*, 6 December 2010). Another cabinet minister, Saviour Kasukuwere, joined the bandwagon of bootlickers describing Mugabe as "God-given" and should be given an "endless" mandate to lead Zimbabwe (*The Standard*, 8 February 2015).

Even when the economy was on its knees, his followers continued to see him as a visionary and a liberator. His position as First Secretary of the party was neither discussed nor contested. It was taken for granted that he would be the party's candidate for presidential elections. The praise singing became worse in the 2000s when age had clearly taken its toll on Mugabe and he was increasingly out of touch with reality, yet refusing to step down. His wife told a cheering crowd at a rally that Mugabe is an unparalleled leader and that she would push her 93 year-old husband to work in a special wheelchair (*Newsday*, 26 May 2016). Addressing another rally, she said her husband was irreplaceable as President and that he

would be fielded as presidential candidate even from the grave (*Newsday*, 26 May 2016). Not to be outdone, the party's youth Secretary, Kudzanai Chipanga, said Mugabe is "Archangel Gabriel" who will be next to God vetting people to see who goes to heaven and who goes to hell (*The Standard*, 4 June 2017). Mugabeism had become a semi-religious revolutionary cult with Mugabe as the High priest and Grace, the High Priestess. The state-controlled media routinely heaped profligate praise on the High Priest and High Priestess in sycophantic articles and programmes. In this cult, "undermining the authority of or insulting the president" was a criminal offence punishable by a jail sentence. Scores of people were arraigned before the courts for "insulting" the High Priest.

MDC ministers in the inclusive government revealed that ZANU PF ministers knelt before Mugabe at cabinet meetings. For the young MDC Information Communication and Technology (ICT) minister, Nelson Chamisa, it was a "culture shock" to see male ministers kneeling before another man. "They all kneel! You have to wonder if their wives know they kneel for another man. Mugabe has total power over them," Chamisa said (*Zimbabwe Situation*, 2 October 2017). It became a common sight to see ZANU PF bigwigs kneel or bow before the High Priest and Priestess at public events such as rallies and funerals. Zimbabwean novelist and poet Chenjerai Hove remarked: "The president has, all of the sudden, been transformed into a religion, a demi-god. The propaganda machine is in overdrive" (*The Sunday Times* 9 March 2004). An economy of terror has been sacralised.

## **7.9 Conclusion**

The end of white settler colonial rule did not, unfortunately, result in a stable, peaceful, just and democratic Zimbabwe. A country whose birth had been mediated by imperialism which ensured that it should not unlock itself from its grip, found itself struggling to implement its own policies that would result in a redress of colonial injustices and imbalances in a global order that does not tolerate resource-rich developing states that try to defy the dictates of imperialism. The young nation did all that it could to create conditions for the flourishing of capitalism. Instead of being an alternative to the political economy of the colonial period, post-colonial Zimbabwe became a continuation of Rhodesia. With the petit bourgeoisie in intimate alliance with white and international capital, it was becoming clear that socialism could not be built on the superstructure of capitalism. The resilient proletariat that had endured years of deprivation, oppression, and injustice had to wait for another day. However,

it would be disingenuous to attribute all the crises that have bedevilled Zimbabwe to the post-colony. It is in the complex mix of neo-colonialism, government policies and elite primitive accumulation that the answer to the fall from grace ought to be found.

The heroes who had “died” for their people soon turned on the people they had liberated not hesitating to use the instruments of repression inherited from the white settler regime to get consent and to silence dissent. Tens of thousands were murdered by the state that was supposed to protect them. The years of suffering during the war became for the African petit bourgeoisie leadership a licence to enormous opportunities for class aggrandisement. They became extremely wealthy within a very short space of time. They had “arrived.” The petit-bourgeoisie leadership abandoned its pre-independence alliance with the proletariat as it dished out state contracts and positions in government departments and SEPs to its clients through vast patronage networks. Most SEPs were severely plundered that they became empty shells. With increased discontent because of unfulfilled promises, the security forces were brought on board to be the vanguard of the revolutionary party. Violence and predation became the two defining features of the feared politico-military alliance. The Zimbabwean dream had turned into a nightmare. From being the second most industrialised country in sub-Saharan Africa with a very promising multi-party democracy, the last vestiges of the developmental state lie in ruins as the country ranks among the poorest on earth with a very serious democratic deficit. The political economy of post-colonial Zimbabwean clearly fits the description of a political economy of terror. The picture that emerges from the tiny southern African country is of a terrified citizenry, scared of the state that has terrorised and impoverished them.

In the next chapter the focus is on economic ethics. From a dialogue between the ancient monarchic Israelite political economy and the post-colonial Zimbabwean political economy we determine the nature of the ethics that emerges.

## CHAPTER EIGHT: TOWARDS AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMIC ETHICS

*The "poor person" is not the result of an act of fate. One's existence is not politically neutral or ethically innocent. The poor person is the product of the system in which we live and for which we are responsible. He is on the margin of our social and cultural world. Even more, the poor person is the oppressed, the exploited, the proletarian, the one deprived of the fruit of his labour and despoiled of being a person. For that reason, the poverty of the poor person is not a call for a generous act that will alleviate his suffering, but rather a demand for building a different social order (Gutierrez 1973:291).*

### **8.0 Introduction**

In looking at each of the political economies separately, we have pointed out markers that qualify them to be labelled political economies of terror. A question that needs to be discussed at this point in this work is to what extent are the two comparable? How is the ancient monarchic political economy designed for a simple agrarian society comparable to a complex system of a modern territorial state under capitalism? In this chapter, we will construct a dialogue by noting their basic structural similarities and differences. We also note the limitations of such an economic ethics, and indeed any ethics that emerges from the biblical text. Finally we explore the economic ethics that arises from the dialogue. As we will see, the economic ethics is relevant, not just for local communities, but the global human community.

### **8.1 Monarchic Israelite and post-colonial Zimbabwean political economies in dialogue**

Ulrich Duchrow (1995:213) asks if it is possible at all to compare the social configurations of ancient polities with those of the modern capitalist states. There are numerous differences between the ancient monarchic Israelite political economy and that of modern Zimbabwe. To begin with, over three millennia separate the two. The historical and social distance between the two societies is simply too great. So much has happened since the Israelite kings (literally) walked the dusty pathways of the land that they ruled. The mass production and

mass consumption introduced by colonialism catapulted Zimbabwe from a subsistence pre-modern economy (like that of ancient monarchic Israel) to a modern capitalist economy of abundance. No longer is subsistence living the norm; it is now the exception (Barrera 2008:294). Modernity also brought with it humane laws, human rights, systems and institutions that are supposed to make life enjoyable, something which the ancient Israelite communities never imagined.

Should the reincarnated Israelite monarchs come back to life and land in Zimbabwe (albeit in its miserable state), they would think that Zimbabweans are gods, or that the Ark of the covenant found its way to the southern African country. They would even regret having lived earlier. Taken on a tour of Harare, and seeing hundreds of thousands of people on the streets, going about their business every day and being told that there are millions others scattered throughout the land, the ancients would be amazed by the sheer numbers in comparison to their subjects. They would inquisitively ask their tour guides where the farmlands of all these millions are or how they earn a living. They would wonder how the Zimbabwean king controls such numbers. We can hear them enquiring who the king is, for how long he has been on the throne, for how long his father was king before him, for how long his dynasty has been in power, how many wives and concubines he has, how many of them are of foreign origin, how many sons he has and which one he has designated to inherit the throne. We can almost see them visibly disappointed to hear that all-powerful monarchs are extinct and have been replaced by a President who is elected by all adults, male and *female*, from all over the country. Further disappointment would await them when told that the laws of the land are not made by the President but by a legislative body made up of representatives elected by the people. For a moment, they would feel they were much better than this powerless President. They would question the extent of his powers.

Taken on a tour bus ride, they would be looking at each other and smiling all the way, failing to believe that the movement of goods and people has been made this easy. They would certainly be amazed by the bridging of distances by modern transport systems. Entering the departmental stores and seeing all the wares on sale, they would not believe their eyes. They would be surprised to find that the luxury goods that they had to send convoys of caravans to collect from long distances and taking weeks, if not months to arrive, are now common in the shops and that anyone with money can purchase them. They would be surprised to find a

currency which is exchanged for goods. If they are told about the modern Zimbabwean market economy, they would never cease to be amazed by how it operates. They would not understand a thing when told about the Zimbabwe Stock Exchange (ZSE). Perhaps what would fascinate them the most are the technological developments, for example, that at the click of a mouse one can see and communicate with people tens of thousands of kilometres away as if they were right next to them. They would definitely be surprised that every Zimbabwean child goes to a formal school, something that was a preserve of the children of the elite when they ruled their kingdoms.

From the city centre, the tour takes them to an industrial area to see what happens in the factories. Getting into David Whitehead, the garment manufacturer, the sheer size of machines busy at work and the scale of industrial mass production would impress them. We can visualise them casting their eyes all over the factory and inquisitively asking who owns all this property, what each machine is called, what it is doing and what they do with the finished products. We can see them touch and feel different types of garments trying to compare them with the ones that they wore and even attempting to fit them. As they are busy marvelling at these monster machines, the grand-daughter of David Whitehead, Michelle, aged 32, walks in, head uncovered, extends her hands to greet them and introduce herself as the owner of the factory. This is unbelievable; such a woman and a young girl at that, owning such property and supervising hundreds of mostly male workers. What happened to her male relatives? Could they not inherit it when Mr Whitehead passed on? Meanwhile, all her employees are smiling and waving at their boss as if to a friend. As if the shock is not intense enough, sadness descends on their faces when they are told that these employees have rights, sign legal employment contracts, earn a fixed salary monthly, work fixed hours and can join trade unions. We can see them nodding their heads in disagreement vowing that such would not have happened to their workers in their life time. For a moment they would consider themselves lucky to have lived at a time when human beings could be sold for debt.

Still trying to process this, the tour guides take them back to the bus on the way to Little England, one of the very few remaining white-owned commercial farms on the outskirts of Harare. Unlike the factory, the farm might be familiar territory. Expecting to see masses of farm workers sweating to death, they would be surprised to see just a handful of them operating different types of farm machinery as they harvest wheat and cotton, spray

insecticides, milk thousands of cows and irrigate the tobacco crop. They would be so glad to recognise the familiar wheat crop. We can hear them wishing that had they had such equipment, they would have become even richer, to be the envy of the kings of the neighbouring polities. We can visualise them pointing at the ripe cotton crop asking what it is and admiring the “white field.” As they are about to leave, the owner of Little England, John Fischer Klepperton, informs them that before the FTLRP, he owned eight farms and that other farmers has as many as ten commercial farms.

The tour would not end without a visit to the President’s official residence. As he takes them on a tour of state house, they would for a moment feel jealousy of his standard of living. He pours them a glass of fine sweet red wine. It is nothing like they have ever had before. As they walk around sipping their wine, they expect that at some point he will take them to his royal chapel where he worships and sacrifices to his gods. They are shocked that he does not even believe in a god. With the wine getting into their heads, it is time to get back to the bus and go. On the way, they pass through a toll gate. Traffic is heavy. Again they wish that during their time they had had such busy highways. They ask the tour guides how life is for the majority of the citizens, especially those in the rural areas. The guides try to be as balanced as possible. As the bus speeds off, they sit quietly processing their experiences to share with one another when they get home. Has everything been new to them? Have they not been able to recognise a few familiar things on this tour? From what the tour guides told them of life in the rural areas and in the townships, they were able to identify a thing or two. They were told of a familiar bartering of goods where, for example, for a goat one gets a bucket of maize. But was everything else really new?

Clearly, there are some important and obvious differences between the two contexts as the imaginary story of the tour of the ancients suggests, so much so that they are not comparable in all respects. However, there is a strong case for comparing the two societies. Robert Wafawanaka (2012:8) argues that although ancient Israel and modern Zimbabwe are different cultures, there are enough strong parallels to warrant a serious cross-cultural comparative study. For Walter Brueggemann (2009:5), while there are certain specifics peculiar to the modern economy, the fundamental issues of economics are the same from ancient to modern times; constants such as the endless tension between haves and have-nots, credit and debt, and loans and interest. For Gottwald (1993:346), what links these two worlds, is a “common



thread of economic inequity and oppression and a common thread of struggle against needless economic suffering.” In comparing cultures that are separated by millennia, our interest is in the *issues*, rather than the *content* of the issues. The content varies from time to time and from place to place while the issues remain the same throughout human history. Furthermore, economies of most of the developing world show features which are very much like the tributary economies of the ancient Near East (Gottwald 1993:351). Thus the question of the comparability of the two contexts can be answered in the affirmative.

To begin with, both communities had lofty ideals of social justice for all during their formative years. After the overthrow of the city-state elite in ancient Israel, the freed agrarian communities deliberately rejected the exploitative tributary mode of production and consciously chose the familial mode of production. The aim of this choice was to promote the ideals of freedom that they had been denied by the city-state elite. Economic power was retained in the hands of villagers who were in charge of their own production, distribution and consumption of the surplus labour value. This was an amazing experiment for antiquity. After nearly a century of oppression and repression, as well as a bloody war, the black majority were finally free to govern themselves in Zimbabwe. The atmosphere was pregnant with promise. Reconciliation with the former oppressor, a government of national unity and a Bill of Rights, Zimbabwe was on course to becoming a free and prosperous socialist society that respects human rights, democracy and peace. Had both followed these ideals religiously, they could have become bastions of social justice.

But the honeymoon could not last for long in both contexts, as “*ubuntu* took flight” (Boesak 2017:118). It became apparent that there were “Pharaohs on both sides of the blood-red waters” (Boesak 2017). It became a time of the betrayal of the cause of freedom and social justice. Both soon turned away from their noble ideals, descending into political economies of terror. Two centuries after independence day, ancient Israel found itself heading back to Egypt when she adopted a monarchy and its tributary mode of production. The end result would be the serious exploitation of the peasants by their own leaders and their networks. Just months after the exodus from the Egypt of a racist and brutal colonial system, the opposition in Zimbabwe came face-to-face with the reality of an intolerant leadership drunk with the wine of power. Before the noise of independence celebrations had even subsided, the working class was already being harassed for demanding fair wages. It got worse with time

when the country descended into a predatory state that impoverished, tortured, maimed and killed its own children.

Concerning ancient Israel, we have noted that unequal access to resources was the essential condition for the “return to Pharaoh.” The intensification of inequality led to the formation of patron-client relationships in which some wealthy and influential men in the tribal alliance who had ambitions to leadership could easily mobilise their clients for political support. These wealthy men could have welcomed the monarchy as a way to strengthen and legitimate their privilege, something that was very difficult under the current arrangement. Thus at the heart of the “return to Pharaoh” was the need to protect the class system, rather than to promote the common good. This is not unrelated to the abandonment of the ideals of independence, democracy, freedom and social justice in Zimbabwe. Right from Lancaster House, it was quite apparent that what was going to drive state policy was the development of capitalism, not the upliftment of the masses. This was to be made manifest when Mugabe opted for reconciliation without justice, paid lip service to a socialist revolution, went at length to court monopoly capital and delayed an agrarian reform process. If capitalism flourished, the elite and their clients stood to benefit. Thus greed sums up the real reason behind the “return to Pharaoh” in both ancient Israel and Zimbabwe. It was because of greed that the noble ideals were abandoned in both societies.

What is also intriguing is that over and above the lofty ideals of freedom, the common good and justice during the formative years of the two societies, there were various attempts by reform movements and social justice forces to return the society to its founding ideals. There were impulses within the monarchic system itself that were aware of injustice. Gunther Wittenberg (2007:97) notes that Israel’s theological reflection on her experiences mobilised resistance against autocratic tendencies of the monarchy. The *am ha’aretz* seem to have supported Absalom’s insurrection against David (2 Samuel 15). The very humane laws in Deuteronomy appear to have been developed during the monarchy in an attempt to reform the nation. So was the criticism of the prophets. In Zimbabwe too, civil society organisations and church bodies such as the CCJP, protested state policy and even suggested alternatives. But like the prophetic critique in ancient Israel, the protest fell on deaf ears. This seems to suggest that once the powers-that-be in a political economy of terror are in overdrive on the road to self-destruction, they are difficult to stop.

Another common feature of the two political economies is the ownership of the means of production by a tiny elite at the expense of the majority. In Ancient Israel, a tiny fraction of the population controlled virtually all the land, the chief means of production in an agrarian society. More and more land accumulated in fewer and fewer hands of wealthy landowners through latifundialization. The peasants lost their family lands through mounting debt and had no option but to hand themselves over to the new owners as slaves, working to repay the debt. Landless and with only their labour for which they were not even in charge, they hovered perennially on the brink of economic ruin. In post-colonial Zimbabwe, ownership of the land continued as it was in the pre-independence era. A tiny white minority controlled virtually most of the best agricultural land until the FTLRP. Most of the best land that had been redistributed hitherto, had been grabbed by the elite for themselves and their patronage networks. Even during the FTLRP, the elites seized the best land with most of them reportedly owning multiple farms. As was the case with the land, most of the country's industries were in the hands of a few TNCs and white families. The ownership patterns inherited from the colonial regime continued with a few strategically positioned black elites entering the elite club. It was extremely difficult for anybody without connections in ZANU PF to climb the ladder and own big business. The party deliberately put obstacles for upward mobility in business in spite of its policies that sought to significantly increase the number of black people that own and control the economy. Nyikahadzoi et al. (2010:673) note that by 2010 little had changed for the black majority as they continued to be systematically excluded from owning big business while white business owners largely retained their dominant economic positions.

Another feature that is common to the two political economies is that both are forms of surplus acquisition by those who control the means of production, at the expense of the majority. By their very nature, centralised polities survive on extraction from the proceeds of the sweat of the citizenry. In Chapter 4, mention has been made of extractive economic patterns in which the elite who were not at all involved in production appropriated the surplus labour product of the peasant majority through taxation, debt instruments and corvée labour. This resulted in mass impoverishment of the peasant majority while the non-producers enjoyed life in conspicuous consumption. Making a fortune out of the labour of the producers, the elites retreated to the cities where they were far removed from the grinding

misery of the peasants. This has also been demonstrated in post-colonial Zimbabwe, right from the heyday of independence when, due to the need to prioritise and appease international finance capital, the ruling elite sacrificed workers' rights to living wages and embarking on strikes. No doubt, the ruling elite stood to benefit if capitalism was allowed to flourish and the economy grew. When the crisis hit the nation, most of the workers who had toiled all their lives were laid off while their meagre pensions were devalued by run-away inflation. They left with nothing. A much-needed land reform process to redress obvious historical imbalances and reduce overcrowding in the former TTLs was deliberately delayed and slowed down by the elites. That was after they had dished among themselves most of the fertile farms that had been abandoned by fleeing white farmers in the early 1980s. Instead of being rewarded for all their hard work, the peasant farmers were met with low prices for their produce and being denied fertile arable land. Farm workers were also known to receive bad treatment from the farmers. The farm workers and peasant farmers who had contributed immensely to making the country the bread basket of southern Africa had nothing to show for all their hard work. They lacked the very basic services such as electricity, running water and proper housing. In fact, the World Bank notes that in 2016,<sup>2</sup> only a mere 15.5% of the rural population had access to electricity.

Due to the fear of open rebellion from the lower classes and thus losing their socio-economic position, the elite in both contexts do not always resort to violence, though it is one of their beloved instruments for getting consent. Rather they readily rely on hegemony, which attempts to justify the exploitation of the masses. The exploited are pacified into submission and will continue to cooperate with the oppressor even to the point of starving themselves to death. This is why despite their sorry economic status, the rural peasant farmers continue to vote to retain ZANU PF in power.

The state in both contexts is at the service of, and is a site of accumulation of, wealth by the elite. The surest avenue to accumulate wealth for oneself in both contexts is to gain state power. The power elite in both contexts suck the surpluses from the lower classes to sustain a privileged lifestyle for themselves and their patronage networks. They do not hesitate to display their ill-gotten wealth through conspicuous consumption, which reinforces their social position, power and authority. Sadly, instead of evoking bitterness, such conspicuous

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<sup>2</sup> World Bank at <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/EG.ELC.ACCS.UR.ZS?locations=ZW>

consumption evokes admiration from the lower classes. In the Zimbabwean context, such people become heroes who are literally deified. The elite like to be praised and worshipped. Occasional acts of charity must be noticed and applauded by all, for that reinforces their position. The elite is prepared to do all that it takes to protect its socio-political and economic interests and position. It is stubborn and does not tolerate dissent. If need be, it resorts to violence to coerce consent. The state's instruments of repression are easily mobilised to defend the interests of the power elite when they are under threat. The state in a political economy of terror is responsible for maintaining the overall structural integration and social cohesion of this stratified society. It is a captured state that has no logic of its own, or a reason for existence apart from being at the service of the oppressor.

Another characteristic feature is the stratified nature of these polities. They are characterised by a rigid class structure which is easy to tell but nearly impossible to dismantle. By their very nature political economies of terror are characterised by inequality. The gap between classes is so vast. The majority of the members of these societies are in dire straits while the tiny elite are living in obscene luxury. Upward mobility for the lower classes is extremely difficult. Differences between social classes are all too obvious to notice. Class is more important than kinship or any other social relations.

What this dialogue has shown is that the modern political economies seem to have retained so many traits of the old exploitative order (Mortensen 1994:13). The political economies in both contexts are marked by a paradox: it is the best of times for the elites, but among the worst of times for the poor (Hollenbach 2002:41).

## ***8.2 Limits of the ethics***

Our argument in this work is that we can develop an economic ethics informed by biblical principles. The biblical vision of economic justice that the pre-capitalist, ancient agrarian society of Israel developed for itself can, and does apply, to a modern capitalist economy.

Gottwald, however, cautions that no ethical model or prescription from the bible can be lifted out and employed in our contemporary context to meet our needs without considering its context and ours (Gottwald 1993:345). To begin with, even though the economy is a central concern of the bible and while ethical judgements and injunctions are the essential foundation of the biblical law, history and theology, with almost every page of the text expressing ethical

values and judgements, there is clearly no scientific economic theory in the modern sense in the biblical text (Meeks 1989:3). The bible does not display an elaborate ethics and given this reality, Gottwald argues, the ethical force of the bible on issues of economics will have to be perspectival and motivational, rather than prescriptive and technical (Gottwald 1993:341).

We will not for a second imagine that the bible can solve any of the technical economic problems facing us today. We are not proposing an ideal or a magical wand that solves all the world's economic problems in a grand thought experiment. No theologian is in a position to lay down a blue print for the transformation of a national economy (Langan 1987:265). Our concern is to outline an ethical framework that can guide the economic life of a contemporary state. While this ethics provides no direct solution for all the huge challenges of the world economy, it does, however, provide the moral foundation for a better individual and global order (Parliament of the World's Religions 1993:4). We are simply pointing the direction in which a modern economy should be moving. The goal of this economic ethics is to lay down principles for the creation of a more humane society. As David Hollenbach (2002:213) argues, it is to provide direction toward a significantly improved state of well-being for the global population in ethically challenging but feasible ways.

It can orient public decisions towards a form of social interdependence in which the poor and marginalised begin to participate in the commonweal in a way that enables them to escape their plight (Hollenbach 2002:173). It might guide human action in ways that lead to better lives for all of humanity, especially those who are on the margins. This work will not provide a detailed blueprint of what an alternative economic system should look like. Our contribution will be seriously undermined if we were to offer recommendations about specific policy issues. Such are extremely complicated issues which lie outside the scope of this work. As we shall propose in a moment, our inclusive economic ethics is a visionary statement of what it means to extend one's hand to a needy member of the human community (Wafawanaka 2012:6). Its role and function is to offer a vision, not to offer concrete particulars (Williams 1993:930). It is aimed at a new economic architecture that embraces ethics and justice (Kobia 2010:13). It is an ethics that offers the possibility of a better economic order that will lead human beings and communities away from despair, hopelessness and chaos.

Herman E. Daly (1996:205) suggests that any ethical principles emerging from this dialogue must be general and fundamental enough to be translated from the pre-capitalist agrarian economies of ancient Israel and Judah to the modern industrial economies under capitalism. He adds that if we are to try to influence the economic institutions and policies of our communities, then we need to discover basic principles that underlay economic situations of biblical Israel and then give those principles a new institutional body through which to influence our modern economy (Daly 1996:205). Limited though the role of the bible is, we believe that knowledge of its economics is necessary if religious resources are to be called upon to deal with economics intelligently (Gottwald 1993:341). The broad ethics that we will sketch out below is part of a much broader conversation and reflection on the economy of both a modern state and the world, and how this reflection can be a motivation for further reflection and scholarly research. We are continuing with the task of thinking in a systematic way about how the inadequacies and inequities within the post-colonial African economies, and indeed within the global economy, are to be understood and resolved.

### ***8.3 Liberation and formation of community***

The Exodus is the foundational tradition in the history of Israel (particularly when read from a Marxist perspective). It shaped the socio-political, economic and religious life of Israel for centuries to come, and even that of the Christian movement. In our reconstruction of the emergence of Israel in Canaan, we suggested that Israel burst onto the scene as an assortment of various groups from the underclasses that had each experienced its own type of “exodus” from its own “Pharaoh”. The Israelites are depicted variously as enslaved, exploited, impoverished, socially and politically disempowered and marginalised. According to the Exodus tradition, Yahweh heard the piercing cries of these lowly people and came down to liberate them. Yahweh is portrayed as a God who fights for and chooses those on the margins to be agents of Yahweh’s new creation. According to Miguel A. De La Torre (2002:160), the God of the Exodus is not some “abstract, impassive cosmic being that utterly transcends the human dilemma”, but is a God who actively enters human history to side with the oppressed and lead them personally towards the promised land of their liberation. Thus Yahweh is characterised by his preferential option for the oppressed and marginalised. That consequently has enormous implications for the way in which the emerging community structures itself and develops its laws, welfare systems and modes of protection (Miller 2005:21). From now on, Yahweh’s concern for those on the margins becomes a central

feature of the biblical narrative. As R.S. Sugirtharajah (2006:209) observes, Yahweh's option for the oppressed as an integral element in the Exodus narrative, which has a foundational character for Israel, exercised a basic influence over virtually all the books of the bible.

In Yahweh's preferential option for those on the margins, Duchrow (1995:145) sees a difference with other deities of the rest of the ancient Near East, a difference that is relevant to our economic ethics. While they were the guarantors of the oppressive economic and political systems, by contrast, Yahweh was experienced as the one who liberates those oppressed and enslaved by the system (Duchrow 1995:145). Furthermore, unlike those other gods that tied themselves to a place, for example, a temple, a mountain or a city, Yahweh ties himself to a group of people from the margins.

To the Exodus should be added the Mosaic covenant which provided the guiding principles for the socio-economic, political, and religious life of the emerging community. The laws of the Torah were intended to preserve the political and economic egalitarianism that Yahweh was creating as deliverer of Israel. Jonathan Sacks (2003:222) argues that the release of the Israelites from bondage was only the first stage on the journey to freedom. He sees the second stage as the making of a covenant with Yahweh, which changed them into a "covenant community". The economics of this community, likewise, would become "covenant economics" (Horsley 2009). The Mosaic covenant is a central theme of the Deuteronomistic history. The actions of the Israelites, both ruler and ruled, are in this corpus evaluated according to their observance of the stipulations of the covenant. The classical prophets also pronounce Yahweh's judgement on the upper classes for oppressing the peasants, in violation of the covenant. In the aftermath of the destruction of the temple, the various theological groups that reflected on the meaning of this catastrophe of unprecedented magnitude, attributed it to violation of the covenantal stipulations and so urged the dispersed and restored populations to learn from it so as to embark on a new beginning and be restored to their past glory.

The origins of Yahwism are indissolubly linked to this Exodus-Mosaic covenant tradition. Mark Glanville (2017:2) observes that this covenant was all about creating a new community, under a new king. For Richard A. Horsley (2009:23), the most striking feature of the covenant is that it established a relationship between this emerging community and its



liberator God, Yahweh, a relationship that was inseparably political, economic and, by definition, religious. The Exodus-Covenant episode dismantled the politics of oppression and exploitation and countered it with one of justice and compassion and simultaneously dismantled the economics of affluence and countered it with the economics of equality (Brueggemann 1980:16). According to Brueggemann (1980:16-17), the reality emerging out of the Exodus-Covenant tradition is not just a new religion or a new religious idea or a vision of freedom, but the emergence of a new social community that had to devise laws, patterns of governance and order, norms of right and wrong, and sanctions of accountability. The Israelites found themselves involved in the deliberate founding of a new social community in line with the vision of Yahweh's freedom and discontinuous with Egypt and the Canaanite city-states. The program of the Exodus-Covenant was not the freeing of little groups of slaves as an escape from the empire as such, but as Brueggemann (1980:18-19) argues, it was an assault on the consciousness of the empire, aimed at nothing less than the dismantling of the empire both in its social practices and in its mythic pretensions.

After the breakthrough from an oppressive system to a more egalitarian society of freedom, the formerly lower classes were made into a community whose cry was "liberty and justice for all" (Meeks 1989:4). James P. Bailey (2010:46) argues that prior to the Exodus, the various groups that came to form Israel, lacked a community. They were simply a dispersed group of people living on the margins. By liberating them and making a covenant with them, Yahweh made community life possible. That Yahweh went to such great lengths to establish a community, not just for a few of the elite, but for all of Israel, indicates that Yahweh intended community to be an essential part of human life. The resulting community was one that would stand at the opposite extreme to what they experienced in Egypt and under the city-states (Sacks 2003:222). It was to become a community of mutual care that lives as a family.

When Yahweh delivered the Hebrew slaves from Egypt and helped the exploited Canaanites to overthrow the city-state elites, it was not just a political liberation from enslavement, but was also an economic liberation from an exploitative economic order. Economic welfare is at the core of covenant life. Rebecca M. Blank (1992:15) observes that Yahweh leads the Israelites out of the oppressive "household" of Pharaoh (and that of the city-state elites) into freedom, establishing a new "household" of mutual support and a new economic system.

Douglas M. Meeks (1989:11) adds that what Yahweh's household seeks to abolish is domination and exploitation, which prevents others from accessing what they need in life. Yahweh is concerned about the socio-economic welfare of the covenant people, free of exploitation and oppression by those who manage to consolidate political and economic power in their own hands (Horsley 2009:18). Thus the covenant focused on stipulations meant to keep them from sliding back into economic and political slavery.

From this discussion, we can identify two things that were central to this foundational episode of Israel's life, namely, the establishment of a community and Yahweh's preference for those on the margins. Ancient Israel, henceforth, was to regard herself as a "covenant community" in a relationship with her liberator God, Yahweh, and since Yahweh had shown his love and preference of those on the margins of society, so were the Israelites to do likewise to the poor among them. In short, Israel was to live as a community with a preferential option for those on the margins. These two lie at the heart of the biblical economic ethics. They, as it were, set the tone for the nature of the community Israel was going to be. They were to be the characteristic traits of this covenant community.

### **8.3.1 Communitarian living**

The form of economic order that the freed peasants felt charged to create can best be described as "communitarian". Likewise the economic ethics was a communitarian ethics. Biblical economics more generally centres on the covenant in the sense that God-given economic rights are inseparably connected with public communal values (Horsley 2009: xvi). The covenantal ethos is basically a community ethos. According to Williams (1993:920), the existence of this new community was henceforth to be characterised by "communitarianism." Consequently, the need for others, for community, was a constitutive dimension of the human person (Williams 1993:920). Brueggemann (2009:6) argues that the formation of the community was an invitation away from autonomy to covenantal existence that binds the self to the holy, faithful God and to neighbours who are members in a common economy. The Israelites were summoned to live as a community of mutual care where every member could flourish, especially the most vulnerable. It was a community that, because of its past experiences, was to ensure that none of its members lacked the basics for survival. Each one was responsible for the other in that one family. According to Sacks (2003:222), it was a community premised on *צדקה* (*tzedakah*). What *צדקה* signified is that no one should be

lacking of the basic necessities of life, and that those who had more than they needed ought to share with those who had less or nothing (Sachs 2003:222). Thus sharing was at the heart of the economic life of the covenant community and is consequently at the core of biblical ethics. Whatever resources were in the community were for the benefit of the whole community.

James C. Scott (cited in Horsley 2009:30) has studied peasant societies and observed what he calls “the moral economy of the peasant”. This refers to the cooperative arrangements of sharing resources, mutual aid and the spreading of risk among villagers in agricultural societies (Horsley 2009:30). He notes that standard across peasant societies are social pressures on the better-off families to share their resources with the less fortunate neighbours and to sponsor community celebrations and projects (Horsley 2009:36). Such moral obligations and expectations are often rooted in religion, as the commands of the deities. He sees the same obtaining in ancient Israel. The covenantal law codes of Israel were vigorous in encouraging generous lending to needy neighbours. This was strongly rooted in the spirit of sharing and cooperation engendered in peasant communities. The sharing and cooperation that enabled needy families to remain economically viable was the result of commitment to communal values represented in the covenant with Yahweh. The covenant society was charged with the responsibility of securing the economic rights of its members to an adequate living. In this way the covenant community of Israel was to be kept intact. Communal interdependence and mutual liability stand at the core of biblical economics.

Patrick D. Miller (2005) studied the Ten Commandments and observed that they offer a definition of the community that seeks the good of all. He writes:

The commandments create, in effect, a defining community. By its structure, the questions of values and norms, the patterns of interaction among members and in relation to others, and the fundamental definition of one’s self are determined as provided by the Ten Words. The very definition of the community and the identity of its individual members are all wrapped in and shaped by the moral space provided by the commandments (Miller 2005:32).

He further noted that the way in which they provide a structure and space for the moral life is not in terms of rights but in terms of responsibilities (Miller 2005:20). Their positioning is always towards the other. He also noted that while the rights of the individual are assumed, however, the way to those rights is always by way of obligation to the neighbour (Miller 2005:20). He concluded that the preference of responsibility (for the other) over (individual) rights is inherent to the vision of the common good of the Ten Commandments.

Glanville (2016) also sees the biblical significance of community in the book of Deuteronomy. For him, over and above addressing the individual, Deuteronomy goes further to offer a vision for the whole society. It does not merely challenge injustice, but rather brings the whole of human life within the scope of the covenant life. As God's people learn to love Yahweh, embracing Yahweh's life-giving rule in the Torah, they will live as family in thanksgiving, joy, justice, and generosity (Glanville 2016).

### **8.3.2 Concern for the margins**

Just as Yahweh had pity on those on the margins and swiftly moved to rescue them, the biblical text is clear, so the covenant community that God creates must have a preferential option for those who have fallen through the cracks of the economy - the vulnerable and marginalised among them. From the Pentateuch, through the writings to the prophets, the Hebrew Bible states over and over again that Yahweh, the God of the covenant, has a special concern for those who are poor, downtrodden, marginalised and oppressed. The Exodus tradition explicitly shows that justice means siding with the oppressed and those on the margins. Yahweh listened to the voice of the poor and excluded slaves and liberated them; therefore Yahweh's redeemed people should open their ears and show the same responsiveness towards the poor and marginalised in their midst (Ex 22: 21; 23:9).

#### **8.3.2.1 The law and ethics**

There are numerous pro-poor laws and regulations throughout the Pentateuch and there are also measures throughout the Hebrew Bible specifically intended to help the poor, the enslaved, the impoverished and the dispossessed, and to protect them from further dehumanisation and give them a semblance of dignity. Laws favouring the weaker members of society reveal the ethos of the Exodus tradition wherein Yahweh rescues helpless slaves;

thus the poor and vulnerable Israelites were given the identity of brothers and sisters to encourage society to care for them (Meeks 1989:75). The Torah intends to ground laws that defend the poor, for it is only in defending these that order and justice can be realised in this community (Meeks 1989:75). The protection of the weak and oppressed was from the start not understood as a sociological or “social ethical” problem, but as a theological one (Duchrow 1995:147). Meeks (1989:75) argues that the fact that Israel rooted the defence of the poor in theology (that is, in regard for God’s being and acts) rather than in the mere concern for order explains why its laws sought to afford greater protection for the poor than did those of her neighbours.

There are three principal groups of the poor which the laws and prophets say must be given special care and protection: the stranger, widow and orphan. Other vulnerable groups include the Levites, slaves, hired labourers and disabled persons. The community of Israel is commanded to tend to the needs of these *personae miserabiles* and to ensure that they get their fair share of the community's resources. The stranger or the resident alien, גר תושב, (*ger toshav*) was someone who, for any reason, was displaced from their own land and found refuge in the tents of another clan or village (von Waldow 1970:186; Glanville 2016). For Wafawanaka (2012:41), the picture of the גר תושב in the three law codes is of someone who is poor, vulnerable to oppression, dependent and in need of communal caring. Thus the law codes endeavour to protect the גר by appealing to the nation’s historical conscience (they were once aliens in Egypt), an experience which should make Israel identify, and therefore sympathise, with the גר תושב among them (Wafawanaka 2012:37). Due to his insecurity and vulnerability, the law stipulates that he should be accorded special protection. Eberhard H. von Waldow (1970:186) argues that although this did not make the גר a person of equal rights, but at least it assured him the protection of an ethical rule which was sanctified by the tradition.

Both the widow and the fatherless (orphan) lacked a male provider and protector. They could thus be easily excluded and exploited. In the law codes, Yahweh establishes a particular order in the community where גר, widows and orphans become a kind of “tabu-person” put under the special protection of God so that oppressing them gives offense to Yahweh (von Waldow 1970:189). In the Deuteronomic Code, the גר is mentioned especially with the widows and orphans, but also with other lower classes in need of special protection, hired labourers and Levites. The formulaic expression “alien, orphan and widow” is characteristic of the book of

Deuteronomy (e.g. 10:18; 27:19; 24:17). The predominant picture in the Deuteronomic Code is that the גר, alongside the fatherless and the widow, are in such a precarious economic condition as to deserve the generosity of others. The Levites seem to have lost their means of subsistence due to the closure of the sanctuaries in the countryside (cf. Deut 12:lff.). The Deuteronomic Code contains the prime example of Deuteronomy's famous humanitarian provisions for the poor and disadvantaged (Wafawanaka 2012:37).

The law codes contain various measures of protecting these vulnerable groups. The wages of the גר תושב and the other poor are to be paid on the same day before sunset because withholding them would worsen their predicament (Deut 24:14-15). There is a prohibition on charging interest on loans to the poor (Ex 22:25; cf. Deut 23: 19-20). If a family member or neighbour is in dire straits, it is prohibited to make a profit out of their misfortune. The widow's garment should not be taken in pledge (Deut 24:17). A brother is supposed to marry his brother's widow and raise children (Deut 25:5-10). This comes with economic responsibilities, that way she will have someone to provide for her. The גר and the orphan are not to be denied justice (24:17). A special ordinance was imposed against forsaking the Levite within their towns (Deut 12:19; 14:27). The widow and the fatherless are not to be ill-treated (Ex 22:22-24). The corners of the field, the gleanings and the fallen grapes are to be left behind for the גר, the orphan and the widow (Deut 24:19-22). That way, the poor are given access into Yahweh's economy of life through the right to share in the harvest. The first fruits of the soil shall be eaten by the whole nation, including the Levites and the גר (Deut 26:1-11). The tithe collected in the third year shall be for the גר, orphans, widows and Levites (Deut 26:12-15). That meant the poor ones, those who have nothing to tithe and accordingly cannot afford their own meals, are the guests at these meals. These verses show the importance of availing the goods of God's blessings to all members of the community.

One of the most compelling mechanisms meant to make the exploited cope was the introduction of the Jubilee Year, שמיטה (*shemittah*) (Lev 25:8-55, Deut 15:12-15). The humanitarian trait of this idealistic legislation is obvious. It proclaimed debt forgiveness or cancellation, liberty from bondage, and return of property to its original owners, in the forty-ninth or roughly fiftieth year. That way it prevented the continuous accumulation of wealth or debt. According to Brian Griffiths (2003:163), an important consequence of the return of the land and property to the owners during the שמיטה was that each family regained a position in

the economic life of the community. The Jubilee offered a new beginning, a second chance, and a path to recovery for those who had lost their land and freedom due to unbearable interest rates. The idea was to periodically restore a level playing field, a clean slate, and give those who had been forced to sell either their labour or their holdings of land a chance to begin again (Sachs 2003:224). It was a measure meant to prevent the development of a permanent underclass. For the law codes, there must be no irreversible poverty and no unlimited acquisition of lands and houses. The purpose of the commandment, according to Brueggemann (2009:6), was to subordinate “money matters” to the future of the neighbourhood.

The Sabbath day (Ex 23:12) was another measure of remedying the miseries of the poor. On that day, the slave and the נֶגֶר were to take a break and rest and be refreshed from hard toil. Sachs (2003:222) avers that on that day, all “economic and political hierarchies were suspended.” The primary function of the Sabbath was to protect the most vulnerable from harsh and exploitative labour practices. The issue was no longer how to prevent people from being impoverished, but, rather, how to ease the fate of the poor fellow citizens (von Waldow 1970:189).

This brief survey of the legal codes, across their redactional histories, has shown that their concern was to maintain the dignity of those on the margins in what was already a crushing situation. These laws intended to create a support mechanism for these groups which would help them from becoming too poor. The responsibility to alleviate the plight of those on the margins fell on those who had the capacity and resources to ensure that such a move from dependency to Yahweh’s household of good living was carried out. The laws were designed to protect these vulnerable groups from further abuse and exploitation. The authoritativeness of these laws lies in that they were mandated by Yahweh. Von Waldow (1970:189) suggests that the pro-poor laws must be considered within the context of the relationship between Yahweh and Israel:

They are part of the religion of Israel. To pull them out of this relationship would make them nothing else than common humanism or general moral laws.

Yahweh is presented as having special concern for those on the margins. Just as Yahweh delivered them from bondage and oppression, Yahweh expects redeemed Israel to be aware of this marvellous deed in their relations with the poor among them.

### **8.3.2.2 Prophetic vision of economic justice**

One of the most striking characteristics of the message of the prophets in the Hebrew Bible, according to De La Torre (2002:161), is the connection they make between Yahweh's judgement and the nation's neglect of those who are most marginalised. Horsley (2009:68) adds that the core of the message of the classical prophets is Yahweh's denunciation of the elites for violating the covenant by their ruthless repression and oppression of the poor. This they saw as having no place in Yahweh's household. The prophets recognise the deteriorating social and economic condition of the poor and match it against the will of God, which was from the beginning, the basis of the social order in Israel. They use the contradictions they see as a foundation for the disaster pronounced by Yahweh (von Waldow 1970:203).

For the prophets, poverty is not something that is beyond explanation. Quite the contrary, it is a situation that human beings have created through greed, exploitation, dishonest and unethical business practices, as well as other forms of injustice. To them, poverty does not just happen, but it happens because people make it happen (Wafawanaka 2012:161). They attribute its existence to the exploitation and oppression of the poor and powerless by the rich and powerful landowners. The poor are battling a system that is designed to keep them in perpetual poverty. The lavish lifestyles of the rich are achieved at the expense of the peasants. According to Leslie Hoppe (cited in Wafawanaka 2012:109), for the prophets, poverty is an evil created by the wealthy who engage in immoral practices to enrich themselves in land and property.

The prophets proclaimed Yahweh's horror at a covenant community in which wealth and luxury were built on the backs of those who suffered economic misery. What enraged their God was that a small segment of the supposed covenant community lived in complacency, blind to the plight of their fellow countrymen and women, enjoying the security of wealth accumulated through a social structure designed to enrich themselves at the expense of the majority (De La Torre 2002:163). The prophetic assessment was that it is unjust that in the



middle of plenty, some have nothing while others have everything. Most importantly, they argued that the abundance going to the rich had been gained from the well-calculated exploitation and oppression of the poor. The orthodox position regarding poverty in ancient Israel was that it was a mark of having sinned. The prophets turned it up-side-down, arguing that it was a result of being sinned against. The poor are thus the source of the fortune that has been appropriated from them by the rich. Consequently, justice is guaranteed only when what has been stolen from those on the margins of society is returned to them (Hobgood 2000:68). Those who obstruct others from getting justice; who treat others unjustly (the wicked), will also reap what they deserve.

In the prophetic literature, the economy is seen from the perspective of the poor and those in need. The prophets acted as advocates and spokespersons for the poor and oppressed. They gave a voice to the silent poor peasants whose voice had been silenced by economic developments, by articulating their cause so eloquently. They proclaimed that God identifies with those who suffer under unjust structures. They deliberately took the side of the poor, warning of the dangers of wealth.

Instead of hoarding, they demanded sharing of Yahweh's blessings with those on the weaker side of the power equation. In Yahweh's household, the hoarding of wealth cannot be justified in the face of grinding poverty for the majority. According to Mary Elizabeth Hobgood (2000:68), while the prophets can rightfully be critiqued for their negative images of women and warrior-like images of God, their class analysis is compelling. She adds that prophets derided religious practices that had lost touch with a God who had enabled ordinary people to triumph over the claims of entrenched ruling elites (Hobgood 2000:68). Yahweh's concern is on the socio-economic welfare of the people, free from exploitation and oppression by those who consolidate political-economic power in their own hands. In all biblical literature, the prophets are the most vicious critics of the socio-economic situation. Their oracles call for justice and they appear to have shaped the social consciousness of the law codes (Wafawanaka 2012:109).

## **8.4 Money-theism has come to stay: biblical critique of global neo-liberalism**

From the foregoing discussion we can identify perspectives emerging from the biblical understanding of economics that will orient our reflection on and can be an ingredient in shaping our contemporary economic system. The perspectives from the law codes and the prophets provide the base for and shape our overall perspective on economic ethics. The bible is thus powerfully generative in imagining an alternative economic system (Brueggemann 2009:6). The ethics that is informed by the prophets and law codes is one that underscores the importance of community and urges for a preferential option for the poor. It is an ethics that is both local and global, and at both levels, community and preferential option for those on the margins are central.

The various human sub-systems and institutions, including the economy, exist for the sake of the human community, not the other way round. This seems to have been the view of the prophets and the spirit behind the law codes. The relationship between humanity and the economy as shown in ancient monarchic Israel as well as in contemporary Zimbabwe, and indeed in any modern society that is in free market capitalism based on neo-liberal economics, seems to suggest that humanity is at the service of the economy. Instead of the economy being embedded in social relations, social relations are embedded in the economic system (Daly and Cobb 1994:8). In this understanding, humanity and all about it count for nothing; the only goal is increased production and maximisation of profits. Free market ideology puts profit before and above people. It is a system driven towards expansion and unending accumulation of wealth, resulting in the commodification of all life, a situation in which all the values and choices of life are transmogrified into commodities exchanged in line with market forces (Childs 2000:5). In a pure market economy, nothing has value unless it has a price tag. In its drive for efficiency, the non-economic goal of economics is forgotten. Efficiency increases the predominance of purely economic ideas at the expense of other values, and subjects everything else to the economy (Moeller 2004:15).

The Gross National Product (GNP) and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that the system uses to measure economic growth do not reveal how the quality of life is faring under prevailing economic conditions. They do not show how the income is distributed, that is, whether the benefits of that growth are shared widely among the population or restricted to a tiny elite (Litonjua 2013:95). Numerous studies show that the quest for aggregate growth has in fact worsened the lives of millions of the world's population. According to M.D. Litonjua (2013:98), it is evident that a rising tide of growth lifts yachts while capsizing and sinking smaller boats.

In global neo-liberal capitalism, human beings are seen in relation to their commercial value. They are turned into mere commodities to be used and disposed of. Neoliberal capitalism commodifies and commercialises human life and everything it touches, without moral moorings, without human values and considerations, without humane intentions and aspirations (Litonjua 2013:104). When human meaning is based purely on the material, the role and place of material things is perverted, making material things primary within human life rather than subservient to larger questions of meaning associated with love, trust, and flourishing (Day 2016:43). Social values that should sustain social relationships, such as human dignity, mutual respect, and personal worth, become meaningless. Every social good is transferred into a commodity. Michael Walzer (1993:120) calls this "market imperialism." Worshiping the market values such as hyper-competition and commodification mirrors what Day (2016:43) calls a "perverted anthropology," the human self is defined by material things rather than by the inherent human dignity and worth that streams out of being made *imago dei*.

Under neo-liberal capitalism, money has assumed total power and has become the focal point around which everything else seems to revolve. As Metropolitan Geevarghese Mor Coorilos (2010:66) asserts, "Money-theism has come to stay." The current global order creates a craving for more and more money, possessions, power, privilege and pleasure and in the end people become dehumanised by deifying these. In a system that regards property as a symbol of status, influence, and power, one's possessions constitute her sense of self and identity (Day 2016:46). The more one has, the more powerful and socially validated one feels (Childs 2000:111). Without a clear sense of self, a strong identity, and a community of purpose, it seems our default mode is to identify ourselves with the things that we own (Wallis 2011:48).

The market and its values become idols as people exceedingly direct their energy towards earning and accumulating financial and social capital in order to find meaning and worth, and be successful and happy (Day 2016:42). People seem to worship those who are “successful” within society - such as celebrities, politicians and even charismatic pastors - to the point of wishing to be like them (Day 2016:42). These have substituted real heroes. We are in no short supply of stories of millionaires and billionaires who seem to have no other passion or motivation in life than to amass money and assets as quickly and as much as they can (Wallis 2011:41-42). The power that wealth creates, allows the rich to influence the rules of economic life in ways that extend that power.

While the owner possesses those riches, she is, in a way, also possessed by them insofar as they offer her a sense of identity and status. Thus, if I am what I possess, then my worth is reduced to a thing, a mere commodity (Day 2016:46). Human dignity does not feature at all in the vocabulary of neo-liberal capitalism. Pope Francis calls this a “liquid economy” in which financial flows matter more than people, in which technical efficiency and productivity trump human dignity (The Catholic Community Television Network, 13 September 2016). The financial bottom line is seen as more important than the human bottom line and figures matter more than human beings (The Catholic Community Television Network, 13 September 2016).

Economic expansion in this system has been increasingly driven by greed. By its very nature, the current global neo-liberal capitalist system promotes and tolerates greed. In its various manifestations, greed has a toxic effect on everything from personal relationships to the distribution of goods through to the environment (Childs 2000:v). It is not difficult to understand why the wealthy think they do not yet have enough, and those with less imitate the ravenously greedy super-rich, so that there is collusion between those who have much and want more and those who have little but long for much (Brueggemann 2009:6). Egoism and the desire for more and more possessions, either for enjoyment or as a status symbol is at the root of the unjust distribution of wealth and of the exploitation of the poor. Greed is often associated with excessive self-concern and excessive self-aggrandisement. In its drive to produce, acquire, spend and hoard, greed manifests itself in unbridled competitiveness. It thrives on callous competition and egoism (Dibeela 2008:191). As Musa W Dube (2000:615)

argues, it is characterised by the ethics of “competitiveness, domination and indifference” as opposed to the ethics of cooperation, solidarity and compassion. To be Number One is more important than anything or anyone else.

At the heart of neo-liberal capitalism lies the selfish craving to make more and more profit, even at the expense of others. Greed breeds selfishness and greed excludes; other people are not seen as human beings, but as cost factors (Prank 2010:27). The neighbour is seen as the object of exploitation. Greed is a mind-set that prevents a person from seeing beyond the self, and everything else is valued and evaluated only in terms of possession (Filibus 2010:48). As a result, this greed-based culture impoverishes human life, erodes the moral and ecological fabric of human civilisation and intoxicates our psyche with materialism (Perera 2010:216). In its most polished form, greed involves not only the hoarding of money and material goods but also of political power and prestige.

The high priests and imams of neo-liberal globalisation argue that the market, and only it, should be the organising principle of society. It is argued that we must follow the market wherever it leads us, because it will guide us to a better future for all. Left to its own devices, the logic goes, the market will conduct itself in a perfect manner and, in fact, only it can provide the moral framework in which everything else ought to operate (Wallis 2011:118). That way, the free market is the sovereign god who operates by means of the “invisible hand” to ensure that everyone gets their due. In reality, the oft-repeated notion that the market is “free” is a myth. Actually, there is no such thing as a “free market.” It is just a system driven by some powerful people who want to run the world unbridled (Filibus 2010:47).

The market has acquired an autonomy of its own, accountable only to itself, not to the wider global population. It has literally become like Yahweh, the jealous God of Deuteronomy, who allows for no competitors; not just one superior deity fighting against other deities for supremacy but the Supreme Deity, the one and only true God, whose rule must be universally accepted (Cox 1999). Or as Jim Wallis (2011:26) notes, the market has become our “golden calf,” our idol of ultimate allegiance. It is the market now that has all the qualities formerly attributed to God - all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, even eternal - unable to be resisted or even questioned (Wallis 2011:28). It and it alone, knows what we need, what we want, how much we should pay for it, and how much we should get paid for selling it to others.

Like a god to be feared and worshipped, we can even know the market's "moods" on a daily basis. We hear that the market is "anxious", "relieved", "jittery", or even "jubilant," and like the devouring gods of pre-modern times, the markets must be fed and kept happy all the time (Cox 1999).

However, the claim that the "invisible hand" of the market *a priori* functions for the well-being of all citizens and guarantees constant progress, is now just a myth that has been refuted by reality (Küng 1997:174). It is a fallacy to argue that when the market is allowed to do its work (without any interference from external forces, such as, government), then the poor have the chance to get out of poverty. Actually, a self-regulating market is an oxymoron. That the privatised and competitively unrestrained market is capable of governing itself is a false ideology (Filibus 2010:50). All evidence points to the contrary. Deficiencies in market processes and outcomes underscore the point that the market cannot be left to operate on its own without oversight or without clearly defined boundaries (Barrera 2011:211). The idea of the free market is deceit and hypocrisy; the assumption is not just questionable, it is seriously misleading. The 2008 global financial crisis effectively debunked the neo-liberal economic myth that deregulated financial markets are "efficient" (Kobia 2010:15). It not only shook the foundations of the global economy but more importantly, it questioned our belief in endless economic growth. It was government intervention that brought the world back from the verge of the abyss of another great depression. The US government intervened to save the market from itself (Litonjua 2013:104). Free market capitalism becomes a beast which first devours the poor and then itself (Brubaker 2010:35). By bailing out troubled banks, the injustice of the system was made evident - the poor were fundamentally subsidising the rich. To use the prophet Isaiah's perspective, the crisis points to a trust and dependence on the work of human hands.

Markets by their very nature are transactional, not moral; they are about prices, not values (Wallis 2011:111). As such a market is a wrong place to look for answers about morality. It is not designed to regulate itself or rid itself from sin. To believe in a market that does not need regulation from outside, a market that is exclusively capable of regulating itself, is to believe in essence, in a market that is not subject to human fallibility, folly and sin (Wallis 2011:188). A pure market system leaves no room for ethics. It is about service to an impersonal, objective goal: that of making money (Duchrow 1995:122). The name of this reality is greed and greed begets evil and evil leads humans and other living beings to

destruction and death (Yong-Bock 2010:202). The market knows neither justice nor mercy, but rewards the strong (efficient) and punishes the weak (inefficient) (Moeller 2004:17). For the market, means are not important. What is important is the end. The end can even justify the means. It is not a moral agent in and of itself but a collective of market participants. It is not an organised group of moral agents, but a random aggregation of individuals in search of welfare-enhancing exchanges with one another (Barrera 2011:211).

Neo-liberal global capitalism excludes and leaves behind more people than it takes along. Entire populations that cannot fit into the system are left in the lurch (Childs Jr 2000:4). It excludes large segments of the population from productively contributing to and benefiting from socio-economic life. As Cardinal Turkson notes, those excluded are no longer society's underside or its fringes or its disenfranchised - they are no longer even a part of it. The excluded are not the "exploited" but the outcast, the "leftovers" (The Catholic Community Television Network, 13 September 2016). Instead of extricating themselves out of structural poverty, many will pass it on to their children.

Left to themselves market economies lead to serious inequalities of income and wealth which distort the market by directing scarce resources to what the rich want and away from the basic necessities of the poor (Grenholm 2004:52). The system furthers the gap between the super-rich and those who have nothing except their lives to cling on to. The middle gets increasingly squeezed and those at the bottom are completely forgotten. The world's poor do not exist in the minds of the wealthy and even if they live around the corner, they seem very far away and dispensable. The free market is designed to benefit a few and exploit billions, it is designed to privilege those who are already privileged (Dube 2000:616). Left on their own, market processes do trap the poor in a cycle of poverty. By their internal logic of "survival of the fittest and fastest" market processes are self-destructive in that genuine vibrant competition is ultimately replaced by monopolies or by oligopolies at best (Barrera 2011:210). The winners in this economic set-up are enjoying their sweet victory while the losers (the poor) feel powerless and hopeless as the world market monster gets mightier by the day.

The contemporary global economic order encourages people to pursue individual self-interest at the expense of community and neighbourliness (Goudzwaard and de Lange 1995:122). Those at the bottom of the ladder are forced to live as less than humans. The poor are pushed

into destitution, starvation and hopelessness. Scenes of people living in shacks and of people searching rubbish dumps for food are testimony to this. Weber captures its essence well when he argues that capitalism is “masterless slavery” where the masters are made invisible behind the mechanism of the market (Duchrow 1995:214). The paradox is that while we live in a world that is increasingly interconnected because of the wonders of modern technology, we seem to be drifting further and further apart from each other as human beings (Wafawanaka 2012:xix). The irony of human progress is the increase in levels of poverty; it is deep poverty in the midst of lavish wealth. Undreamt of personal wealth exists side-by-side with the most abject poverty (Goudzwaard and de Lange 1995:1). We would expect that as material affluence increases, poverty would be reduced rather than increased.

At the global level, this economic order has also increased the gap between developed and developing nations. Neo-liberal globalisation is not a system of mutual advantage, but one in which developed states have imposed and continue to impose economic policies that disadvantage developing states (Shapcott 2010:214). In this global order, the distribution of goods and services remains a one-way traffic in favour of the rich and powerful. The wealthier nations impose an unjust institutional order which consistently disadvantages and harms the poorer nations. In short, the global economic set up is immoral, exploitative and causes a great deal of suffering in the developing world. Far from it being a solution to ending poverty, the contemporary economic system has actually become an obstacle to the eradication of poverty.

We are not, however, unaware of the good that the market has done in transforming human lives for the better. The market can indeed be a good thing and even necessary. But it now commands too much, claims ultimate significance, controls too much space in our lives, and has gone far beyond its proper limits (Wallis 2011:28). It has assumed religious dimensions. In the market, we have substituted moral values for “market value” and all that is good and right is attributed to the power of the market. It has replaced the practice of citizenship with the rituals of consumption, and the identity of the consumer has replaced the identity of the citizen (Wallis 2011:26). The market has outdone everything else and replaced much of the moral space of society, evening questioning the value of having “moral space” where the market does not reach (Wallis 2011:26). Neoliberalism has, in all intents and purposes, created not only a market economy, but a “market society” (Litonjua 2013:104).



It is, therefore, an undeniable fact that the present market oriented economic system benefits only a tiny minority and worsens the plight of the majority. An economic order that operates in such a way as to push the majority to the margins of society and keeps them from fully participating in community, and thus, from fully experiencing their humanity, is an economy of death which has reached a point where it must be renewed (Bailey 2010:47). The prevailing global economic system is a totalitarian, plutocratic and therefore undemocratic system. It is a system of terror characterised by survival of the fittest and fastest. It is a distortion of human life which has led the world to the brink of abyss.

It is a system based on fear, exploitation and greed. The free-market economy has failed to achieve a democratic and socially just allocation of global resources (Tourres 2010:115). The forces of selfishness in the global economy have all but removed the possibility of appeal to our neighbour. It is a system that creates individuals at the expense of community and represents the victory of individualism over community (Childs 2000:89). It creates what J F Freie (cited in Childs 2000:111) refers to as “counterfeit communities”, arrangements that give the illusion of community but are not at all genuine. It is anti-people and anti-community and as such should be rejected. It enslaves people to greed, accumulation and consumption rather than to communal share and care. Clearly the modern economy needs an “exodus” from its own modern day “Pharaohs” who include transnational corporations such as banks, the media, governments of Western states, as well as the Bretton Woods institutions, that dominate and criss-cross it in their race to the top for more and more power and profits. The current crisis in the global economy is an opportunity ripe for an exodus from this parasitic system of anxious acquisitiveness that is rooted in autonomy. Under this system, which is continuously sowing the seeds of its own destruction and now seriously under siege, the continued existence of all forms of life on earth is threatened. Meanwhile, those who hold the keys of the system continue to amass more and more of the world’s wealth.

### ***8.5 Economy at the service of life***

The foregoing critique of global neo-liberal capitalism has brought to the fore the urgency of an alternative economic order, an economy at the service of life. From now on we look at the substance of the inclusive economic ethic, the normative ethical guidelines of what an

economy at the service of humanity ought to be. The two notions of community and preferential option for the poor, as inspired by the prophets and law codes, are at the heart of this ethics.

### **8.5.1 *Homo economicus* as person-in-community**

In the face of an economic globalisation that reduces human beings to their value in the market, a political globalisation that marginalises them from effective access to power, and a cultural globalisation that rides roughshod over the communal patterns by which people make meaning and give expression to their values and beliefs, it is crucial that we advocate an ethics that puts human dignity at the centre, and emphasises the importance of the human community for the full realisation of individual member's potential (Himes 2008:275). A biblically inspired ethics views a person as a person-in-community and likewise, human life is life-in-community (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops [USCCB] 1986:16). Every individual has the right to community. Human dignity can be realised and protected only in community and it is in community that one finds fulfilment as a human being (Himes 2008:275). In contrast to the dominant global neo-liberal autonomous and separate "I", this alternative view sees the self as essentially in-relation-to-others and thus "I", as a self-in-relation, am in some real sense also a "we" (Hobgood 2000:21). We argue strongly that human beings are more appropriately understood as persons-in-communities rather than as individuals-in-markets (Cobb 1994:8). The individualistic view of *homo economicus* which regards society as an aggregate of individuals should be substituted by a view of *homo economicus* as person-in-community (Daly and Cobb 1994:159). Instead of defining competing individuals as its starting point, the new economy will be based around "the person in community." We can go a step further and consider humankind as one big family.

Meeks (1989:12) argues that there is in reality no such thing as a radically individual and isolated human being. He adds that we are human as a result of being constituted by our relationships with the other members of our human communities (Meeks 1989:12). We come into being through these relationships and we do not have an identity apart from them (Daly and Cobb 1994:161). We are who we are in relationship to others. In other words, who we are comes into being socially. Community is not an option for humanity; rather it is part and parcel of the essence of being human.

If a human being is human only in a community, then it follows that the role of the economy, and indeed any other social institution, is to be at the service of the human community. The real end of economic activity, argue Thomas A. Klein and Gene R. Laczniak (2009:235), is the development of the entire human community, especially those members who are at the bottom of the pile. This, as we saw, is in line with biblical ethics that conceives the world as a “site of struggle” for the realisation of a community in which all members will have a secure and fulfilling place (Gottwald 1993:341). According to Gottwald, the communitarian yardstick - which is the biblical measure of political economy - is whether that mode of production, and the power relations governing it, build up the *whole* community, providing it basic services and creating opportunities to realise the life possibilities of the greatest number of people (emphasis added) (Gottwald 1993:361). The goal of economy is the building up of communities, rather than the expansion of markets. An economy which allows that to happen is a just economy. A just economic system builds, strengthens and enhances human communities; it is inclusive, involving all able members in responsible, participatory, and economically rewarding activity (Blank 1992:39). Our economic systems ought to recognise this common humanity and thus give all members of the human community access to material necessities of life. The Second Vatican Council of the Catholic bishops noted:

... the subject, and the goal of all social institutions is and must be the human person which, for its part and by its very nature, stands completely in need of social life. This social life is not something added on to man. Hence, through his dealings with others, through reciprocal duties, and through fraternal dialogue, he develops all his gifts and is able to rise to his destiny (*Gaudium et Spes*, Para. 25).

Two decades later, the United States Catholic Bishops summed it up thus:

The dignity of the human person, realised in community with others, is the criterion against which all aspects of economic life must be measured... Economic life must serve and support this dignity which needs to be realised in relationship and solidarity with others. To be human is to hear the call to community... Human wisdom and experience confirm this religious conviction that human life is essentially communitarian... Wherever our economic arrangements fail to conform to the

demands of human dignity lived in community, they must be questioned and transformed (USCCB 1986:8).

Simple justice then, demands the setting up of minimum levels of involvement in the life of the community for all its members. Justice demands that social institutions be organised in a way that ensures that all human beings can participate actively in the economic, political, and cultural life of their community (USCCB 1986:18). A just economic order is one in which every member in society has an equal chance to reach their full potential as a human being. Social justice means that human beings ought to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society in turn has an obligation to enable them to participate in this way (USCCB 1986:17). Injustice is for a person or a group of persons to be treated as if they do not belong to their community, by being denied the opportunities for such participation.

Our understanding of the role of economics in society tallies well with the original meaning of οἰκονομία, which refers to the “management of a household.” The implication of οἰκονομία is that economics is deeply embedded in communal relationships (Childs 2000:64). The economy of the household is planned specifically to provide the basic needs of all the members of the household. Meeting basic human needs is the prime goal of an economy. It is therefore imperative, argues Duchrow (1995:231), that the focus of the economy be shifted from money accumulation to meeting people’s needs. In the alternative economic system we propose, human beings are players, not economic objects. What is needed is a community that shapes an economy, rather than expect an economy to generate a community according to its own values and principles. The economy should be a servant of the community rather than the community being dissipated by economic forces. If our approach is centred on community, then markets are only important because of the benefits that they bring. Seeing the economy as embedded in communal relationships means seeing it as just one among many “orders” in human society, such as, politics, religion and culture, all of which are interrelated for the purpose of serving its general well-being (Childs 2000:96). The economy is only a sub-system of society, alongside other sub-systems, all of which are indissolubly connected. It does not travel on a separate pathway from all other institutions, neither does it move in a separate orbit. Rather, it is tightly woven together with the other “orders” of life. This is the economics of the household - οἰκονομία - the economics of community which looks at economic activity in relation to all aspects integral to human community (Childs 2000:88).

The problem, notes Hans Küng (1997:211), is that the sub-system of the market economy under global neo-liberal capitalism, has in fact been elevated to become the total system, so that the other sub-systems are not only analysed with economic instruments, but are in practice subjected to the economy, domesticated by it and depotentiated. The measure of a nation's economic success is not so much its total assets (wealth and property), as the equitable distribution of these assets (Bailey 2010:34). The appropriate question is not "how much is a nation producing?" but "how are its citizens faring?" Thus the progress of the economics of community must be measured by a more comprehensive index than GNP (Childs 2000:88). GNP measures only some aspects of welfare, and to treat it as a general index of national wellbeing is a fallacy (Daly and Cobb 1994:63). Increase in GNP does not necessarily imply improvement in the quality of human life. Economic advancement is not the full story. Economics is not a separate part of reality on its own. Human welfare has dimensions other than the economic. Human progress is much more inclusive and much broader than mere material progress. The assumptions of economists that the stronger the economy, the greater the contribution to human welfare and that total welfare and economic welfare always move in the same direction are clearly not true (Daly and Cobb 1994:63, 146). If it were so, poverty could have been eradicated a long time ago. The kind of community we envision is one in which human dignity is emphasised more than anything else. Every available instrument of well-being - government, charity, private sector - must be mobilised in order to mediate the resources of the community for the sake of the good of all (Brueggemann 2009:12).

Following from this social nature of humanity is the supremacy of communal welfare over individual achievement. The Second Vatican Council (*Gaudium et Spes*, Para. 25) emphasises that man's social nature makes it evident that the progress of the human person and the advancement of society itself hinge on each other. In contrast to the dominant neo-liberal view of an inherent contestation between the demands of community and individual freedom, we argue that the good of the community and the individual good are integrally related. Barrera (2008:306) argues that far from being at odds with each other, the good of the individual and of the community are necessarily interdependent. Hobgood (2000:23) maintains that there is no opposition which exists between "I" and the "others", between my self-interest and the commonweal. The good life of an individual and the common good are for Hollenbach (2002:3), inseparable. For him, the good of the community should have

priority in setting direction for the lives of individuals, for it is a higher good than the particular goods of private persons. Ronald Modras (1985:140) adopts a Thomistic perspective and argues that the good of the individual must be subordinated to the common good but not so as to disvalue the individual or to cancel out individual human rights. Putting individual welfare above the good of the household constitutes individualism, out of which neoliberal capitalism has emerged.

### **8.5.2 Preferential option for the margins**

We have already seen that in the Exodus-Covenant narrative, Yahweh deliberately chose to align Godself with those on the margins of the Canaanite and Egyptian societies. The prophets also adopted this one-sided approach. The law codes that they inspired also spoke for and sided with those on the underside of the economy. This is a very important insight and a second pillar of this economic ethics. The characteristic contribution of the notion of the preferential option for the poor is to call attention to the importance of giving primacy to the needs of the poor (Bailey 2010:52). It contributes to inclusiveness. It is a commitment undertaken, not by the poor, but by the non-poor. Correspondingly, the preferential option for the poor exercised at a global level is a commitment undertaken not by the poor peoples of the Global South, but by the rich of the world. The concept views the good done for the poor not as “an addition to” but worked out in the everyday activities of human life (Miller 2005:22).

Human dignity dictates that every member of the human community has a right to material goods that are necessary to live a minimally decent existence. As Brueggemann (2009:5) puts it, “all members of society - including the poor, even the ‘undeserving poor’ - are legitimate recipients of enough to live in dignity, simply because they are there.” This means that all members of the human community have a special responsibility to the poor and marginalised to ensure that they live such a life. Every member is responsible for the welfare of the others in this one human family. Pope John Paul II described this special obligation to the poor as

a call to have a special openness with the small and the weak, those that suffer and weep, those that are humiliated and left on the margin of society, so as to help them win their dignity as human persons and children of God (USCCB 1986:20).

The needs of the poor are more urgent than those of the rest of the community. Assisting the poor is not just an obligation of charity, but a firm demand of justice. Justice, in this case, implies that the poor have a superior moral claim on the community's resources (Velasquez 1987:59) and have the most urgent claim on the conscience of the nation (Biedenkopf 1987:209). Establishing justice implies that one must give preference to members that are excluded from fully participating in the life of the community.

An inclusive ethics maintains that all human institutions, including the economy, must be at the service of *all* human beings, especially those whom the prevailing social order does not acknowledge as persons: the poor, the exploited, those systematically and lawfully stripped of their human status, those who hardly know what a human being is (Litonjua 2013:89). This is because according to the market law, the weakest suffer the most. In making economic decisions and policies, we should be most concerned about those who are most threatened with death, injustice, poverty and oppression. According to the US Catholic Bishops (USCCB 1986:viii), any economic system is judged by what it does for and to people and by how it permits all to participate in it. In other words, it must be judged in the light of what it does to and for the poor, and what it enables the poor to do for themselves. Thus, an economy is just when it has established minimum levels of participation by all persons in the life of the human community (USCCB 1986:viii). Social policies are to be evaluated according to how they affect the poor and marginalised. Consequently, those policies that benefit the better off at the expense of the least well off are unjust. How the poorest members of society are managing is the litmus test of the correctness of an economic system (USCCB 1986:viii). This, as we have already noted, cannot be measured by GDP/GNP.

A biblically inspired economic ethics adopts what Prince Moiserale Dibeela (2008:195) calls the "Eucharistic model" of economy, which, for him, is a social agreement that all shall be included in this economy. This model is one of sharing resources with everyone, regardless of one's ability to compete. It views human beings, not just as individuals required to make only self-focussed decisions, but as members of a community, called to invest resources, time and effort in responding to the needs of others (Blank 1992:23). It means we are to work towards the inclusion of all human beings into one common household, so that all members have access to resources necessary for a decent life and that everyone is allowed to participate fully in the life of the community (Blank 1992:22). This ethics holds that in a

genuine human community, the basic needs of all members are met so far as the community is able to do so.

The notion of preferential option for the weak and marginalised is not against growth *qua* growth. There are types of growth that are genuinely needed in many poor places. What is needed is a different type of progress, one that is “healthier, more human, more social, more integral” (Pope Francis LS 112). It is against growth as the be-all and end-all of economic life. Human development is not simply about economic growth, but is in the last analysis, about human well-being and meeting basic human needs. A society is not really developed unless it provides opportunities for all its citizens, especially the poor, to meet their basic needs (Litonjua 2013:107). It is antithetical to an economic system preoccupied with maximising profits and concentrating wealth in the hands of a tiny minority, leaving out of that growth large segments of the human population (Mor Coorilos 2010:65). Pursuing riches is what ruins and destroys communities and nations. Emphasis on growth, by its very nature, operates on the basis of unbridled competition, over cooperation, and is aimed at satisfying the wants of the rich over the needs of the poor.

Priority must shift from economic growth and financial health to human flourishing so that all members of the community can live with dignity. The notion of preferential option for the poor recognises that meeting essential human needs must come before the fulfilment of desires for luxury consumer goods. It aims at meeting people’s needs in a sustainable way. This option involves a reorientation of our value system, from placing a higher value on things to people, so that everyone in the household will have access to what it takes to live. Further, it rejects the notion that the best economic conditions will be obtained so long as the market is left to its own manoeuvres. It argues that respite for the poor cannot be left to the calculations of the marketplace. Economic systems are not governed by impersonal and unalterable laws but are human institutions which need to be subordinated to the good of all (Bailey 2010:85).

This ethics agrees with John Ilife (cited in Wafawanaka 2012:11) who argues that the majority of the poor in our modern societies, as in ancient Israel, are the “structural poor.” Structural poverty is caused by structures that inhibit the poor from accessing goods, resources and services that are available to others in the broader society. As we saw in the opening quote, the poor are the product of the system we live in and for which we are



responsible (Gutierrez 1973:291). These structures have economic and class dimensions. Because they are put in place by human beings, the very same human beings can dismantle or reform these structures if they have the will to do so. The concept of preferential option for the poor does not call for the giving of our “spare change” to the poor, rather it calls for the radical restructuring of economic structures which privilege one percent of the world’s population with the greatest riches ever known to humanity while the ninety-nine percent survive on the crumbs that fall from the tables of the rich (De La Torre 2002:79). It is not a call for a generous act that will alleviate their suffering, but is rather a demand for building a different social and economic order (Gutierrez 1973:291). It does not just concern itself with bandaging the wounds of the many injured people left on the road-side by the global economic system. Rather, it urges us to confront the real problem: the thieves and robbers on the highway (Rivera-Agosto 2004:69). It calls for a serious challenge of the dictatorial policies of the global neo-liberal economy.

The alternative economic ethics we are advocating requires transformation of both local and global socio-economic structures that trap and keep billions in poverty, perpetuate scandalous inequalities and cut off the poor from fully participating in the economic and social life of the human community. As Jonathan Sachs (cited in Wafawanaka 2014:117) argues, extreme poverty could be ended by 2025 if the developed nations of the global north assist the developing nations of the south in achieving economic independence and removing barriers to fair dealings. Pogge (cited in Shapcott 2010:187) weighs in, noting that “for the first time in human history it is quite feasible, economically to wipe out hunger and preventable diseases worldwide without real inconvenience to anyone.” Indeed the persistence of global poverty in the world of plenty is contradictory. Justice means challenging these economic arrangements and exploring ways to enable those who have been impoverished to recover from their situation. The rich individuals and nations who have gained most from the current economic arrangement have a moral obligation to transform it in such a way that the needy can also access the resources of the earth. Social justice calls for action to pull down the artificial walls dividing the poor from the rich at both local and global levels. To do this, what is needed is a cultural orientation that places higher value on interdependence and solidarity than the predominant “each-one-for-himself-God-for-us-all ethic” (Hollenbach 2002:41).

An important aspect of the option for the poor is what Litonjua (2013:90) calls “solidarity”. Solidarity helps us to see the poor not as carriers of symptoms, but as our neighbours, to be made sharers, on a par with ourselves, in the banquet of life and deserving of our aid (Himes 2008:276). It enables one to listen to the voices from the margins and to seek reform and redress for injustices that they suffer. It is experiential and allows one to put oneself in the shoes of the poor. It pitches tents among the homeless and identifies with the oppressed (Mor Coorilos 2010:65). By so doing,

one begins to experience not only their pain and struggle but also their hopes and their joys. Experiencing the situation of the poor leads to solidarity with them to a new way of thinking, a new way of seeing social reality, a new way of living. Without the virtue of solidarity, the poor are "they," the objects of our pity and generosity. In solidarity, the poor are "we," sensitive to the needs and feelings of others, devoted to their common welfare. With the virtue of solidarity, we are open to be challenged by the poor and to challenge them in turn (Litonjua 2013:92-93).

At the global level, the concept of solidarity translates to partnerships between the developed and developing nations, for the benefit (mostly) of the latter. The participation of the voiceless (including the developing nations) in economic decisions that affect them is of paramount importance. Globalisation has bridged distances and reduced the world to a small village. For this reason, there is no excuse for the West's indifference to the plight of the poor. As members of a global village, we are family members responsible for one another. Those family members, who have more than they need and are in a position to help those in need, have a responsibility to do so. A biblically inspired economic ethics sees extreme inequality, as we have in the world at the moment, as a threat to the solidarity of the human community, and a fertile breeding ground for deep social divisions and conflict.

We end this ethics with a categorical imperative: an economic system is ethical and just if it is geared towards meeting the needs of those on the margins. It is unjust and unethical if it does otherwise.

## ***8.6 Conclusion***

In this chapter, we have discussed the possibility of comparing the political economies of ancient monarchic Israel and post-colonial Zimbabwe and we argued that it is indeed possible to compare the two, the numerous differences between them notwithstanding. We also noted the limitations of the economic ethics that emerges from a reading of the law codes and the preaching of the prophets, noting that we cannot provide a detailed blueprint of what an alternative economic order should be like. Rather we made a modest suggestion that the economic ethics is only perspectival and motivational. In our critique of the dominant global neo-liberal market economy, we viewed it as a political economy of terror, death and fear, which is ruled by endless growth, accumulation and consumption by the minority at the expense of the majority on the margins. We suggested that an alternative economic order is needed as a matter of urgency, both at the local and global levels. Two notions of community and preferential option for the poor emerged as the fundamental pillars of the economic ethics. These two, as we saw, emerged during the Exodus-Covenant tradition as defining features of the emerging community. Taking a leaf from that tradition, we argued that an alternative economic system should view all human beings as members of one family, a community. A person is by nature social, not by choice and so fulfilment and flourishing of human life takes place in community. In that community, each one is their “brother’s keeper,” and in this community, the needs of the poor take precedence over the wants of the rich and powerful. The justice of any economic order, we argued, is judged by what it does to the weak and marginalised.

## GENERAL CONCLUSION

### *Introduction*

In Chapter One we asked a set of questions that we have been attempting to answer. This part is going to give an overview of how we have attempted to answer these questions. There are some issues that have not been dealt with adequately while others have only been mentioned in passing. These will be recommended for further research.

### *Summarized overview of the project*

The Late Bronze Age was characterised by cataclysmic upheavals throughout the ancient Near East. When Iron 1 period dawned, a reconfiguration of the politics of the region had taken place. The superpowers of the day had weakened. Egypt had deteriorated considerably and subsequently withdrew from Asia. With the withdrawal, smaller polities in Syria-Palestine emerged. The polity known as Israel which emerged on the highlands of Canaan was one of them. Following Gottwald's hypothesis, it has been argued that Israel emerged as a social revolution in which the peasants mobilised themselves and overthrew the exploitative city-state elites. The majority of the Israelites were native Canaanites, that is, geographical insiders, as opposed to outsiders. Only a tiny percentage came from Egypt. But it was this tiny group that gave the new emerging society its religious impetus. With the overthrow of the city-state system and its tributary mode of production, it has been argued that the coalition introduced its own familial mode of production, in which all had more or less equal access to the land, the chief means of production. The coalition deliberately refrained from forming a central political organisation for the sake of enjoying its freedom. Likewise it did not have a central legal or cultic authority. It also refrained from setting up a taxing apparatus. Tendencies towards forming a petty chieftainship were deliberately resisted.

But after two centuries of freedom, Israel was ready to go back to the tributary mode of production. It does seem that there was fierce contestation among the men of Israel on whether or not to adopt a monarchy. Finally, the pro-monarchy group won the day and Israel became a monarchy like the other nations around her. However, the coming of the monarchy was not an event neither was the monarchy something that they woke up with one morning.

Rather, there is evidence of creeping in of state institutions accompanied by the fading of tribal structures and institutions.

The political economy of ancient Israel has been described as hierarchical with the king at the top of the pyramid. He was surrounded by his advisors and bureaucrats. Appointment to key positions in the kingdom depended on one's relationship with the monarch. The state had a taxation apparatus in which officials collected tax from the peasants. Given the limited nature of the pre-capitalist agrarian economy of ancient Israel, the "surplus" was not real surplus. It was the little that was left over and stored for the future to cushion the household against likely bad harvests in the near future. It is these little surpluses that were taxed by the ruling elite.

Should natural disasters occur for two or three consecutive years, their crops failed and their animals suffered or died. They were forced to take survival loans from the rich landowners who charged usurious interest rates. Debt instruments led to the peasants losing their property and plots of land to the rich landowners and money lenders. The legal system was captured by the elite and could not stop them from acquiring properties they targeted. More and more land was getting into fewer and fewer hands. Ultimately, they would give their family members and themselves to slavery for debt. It led to impoverishment of the masses. For the absentee rich landowners and urban money lenders it was a time to acquire more and more land and to get richer and richer. Their wealth was consumed in the city which was primarily a site of consumption. The elite lived in splendid town houses and displayed their wealth in a way that was envied by the peasants and debt slaves. They made extravagant sacrifices to their gods and the temples became a site of wanton display of wealth. Through systematic exploitation of the peasants, the upper classes became extremely wealthy while the majority of the toiling peasants were in a quagmire. This is the situation that the prophets of judgement condemned.

To make the peasants continue to pay their taxes even when they were so impoverished, the ruling elite relied on a combination of force and persuasion. They made the peasants believe that it was in their best interest and also that it was the will of the gods that they should continue to make those sacrifices. But, it does appear that the upper classes' persuasion was

not always successful. It does seem that when class consciousness developed, the peasants would revolt against this political economy of terror.

When discussing the emergence of the state, we utilized the Marxist theories that emphasise conflict, warfare and class. It has also been argued that ancient polities cannot be called “states” because states are a modern phenomenon. Thus ancient Israel cannot be a state as modern Zimbabwe is a state. Rather it was suggested that these ancient pre-capitalist polities should be called monarchies or kingdoms. Among some of the characteristics of the modern state that differentiates it from the ancient polities are sovereignty, territoriality and citizenship.

A discussion on the future of the state has also been entered into. In spite of the many eulogies of the state, that it might go the way of the city-state or empire, it has been concluded that the state as a form of socio-political organisation will be around for a long time. Despite the emergence of federations and groupings of states which seem to want to take over the role of the state, the state has shown that it is resilient and probably now more than ever before.

With regards to Africa, it has been noted that the state boundaries were crafted to prevent imperial powers from fighting with one another during the scramble for the continent. People of different ethnicities, cultures, even races woke up one morning to find that they were henceforth citizens of one state. That it has been noted had enormous implications for the stability of the many African states. African states were created not for self-determination but to supply cheap raw materials to the Western world. They were made in such a way that they would not wean themselves from dependency on imperial powers. From the lofty heights of the independence of Ghana, one African after another descended into tyranny, civil strife and poverty. A number of states became failed states while others became quasi-states, existing only in name. In some states, there was no difference between the state coffers and the leader’s personal bank account. But we also questioned the appropriateness of the state system to Africa and the readiness of the first generation of African leaders to take over state power. Perhaps most important was the suggestion that Africa and the developing world are caught up in the global colonial matrix of power. They were made in such a way that they continue to be trapped in the global economy in which they have no say. If they try to raise

their heads and deny what the imperial powers want, their heads will be chopped off immediately. Thus it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, for African and developing countries to implement their own policies independent of or without the approval of imperial powers.

Zimbabwe became a good example of an African country that was “reduced to size” by Western imperialism when it tried to take away the farms from white farmers to redress an obvious historical imbalance. The country became a pariah in the world of international diplomacy, went on to rank among the poorest in the world and register the second highest rate of inflation in recorded history. Its best brains had migrated far and wide. Citizens were dying of such curable diseases as cholera. Things fell apart. However, as noted above, it was not as simple as that. The African nationalist petite bourgeoisie that came to power in 1980 should also shoulder the blame for the sorry state in which the nation now finds itself in. The country was full of potential at independence in 1980. But somewhere along the line, the African nationalist petite bourgeoisie leadership veered the vehicle off the road and with only twenty years after the fall of white settler colonial rule, the nation was in deep trouble. The power elite and their patronage networks milked the state coffers and the SOEs dry. The socialist democratic ideals got lost somewhere on the way as the former heroes competed to outdo one another in converting state resources for their own personal use. The state was a predatory state that skinned alive its own citizens. The power elite celebrated and did not hesitate to use violence to get compliance from the citizens who were not happy with their policies. The fact that it took a military intervention to remove the founding father of the nation after thirty seven years in power shows the extent to which power was entrenched in one person and partly explains the socio-political and economic ruin that the land is in.

The last set of questions had to do with the dialogue of the two political economies and the inclusive economic ethics that emerges from the dialogue. It has been argued that despite their geographical and spatial differences, the two have points of similarity. The point has been stressed that it is the content that is different but the issues are basically the same. Economic inequality and oppression, as well as the struggle against needless suffering by the lower classes - key features in any economic situation - are strong enough parallels to warrant a cross-cultural comparative study. Furthermore, the essential issues of economics are the same through the passage of time: the endless tension between haves and have-nots, credit

and debt, as well as loans and interest. We were thus justified in making a comparative study of the two political economies.

We have argued that an inclusive economic ethics inspired by biblical principles is feasible from this dialogue. It is an ethics that has its roots on the Exodus and Sinai traditions. At the Exodus event, Yahweh showed his option for the poor by choosing the people on the margins. The Sinai tradition (Mosaic covenant) provided the guiding principles for the socio-economic, political and religious life of this emerging community, making them a covenant community that practises covenant ethics. When Yahweh delivered Israel from whatever bondage, it was not just a political liberation from enslavement, but was also an economic liberation from an exploitative economic order. Since Yahweh had shown his preference for those on the margins of society, so were the Israelites to do likewise to the poor among them. The Israelites were summoned to live as a community of mutual care where every member could flourish, especially the most vulnerable. Just as Yahweh had pity on those on the margins and swiftly moved to rescue them, so the covenant community that he created must have a preferential option for the vulnerable and marginalised among them. The concern of the legal codes was to uphold the dignity of those on the margins in what was already a crushing situation. The biblically-inspired ethics is one that underscores the importance of community and urges for a preferential option for the poor.

Scholarly honesty dictates that we admit the limits of the ethics. We cannot provide a detailed blueprint of what an alternative economic order should be like. That is the task of economists, not theologians. Rather our modest suggestion has been made that the economic ethics analysed here is only perspectival and motivational. But, as Gottwald reminds us, this kind of ethical force is considerable. Notwithstanding the very real differences and the distance between the monarchic economic systems of the ancient Israel and modern day economic systems of Zimbabwe, what connects these two economies of terror “is a common thread of economic inequity and oppression and a common thread of struggle against needless economic suffering” (Gottwald, 1993:346).



## ***Areas for further research***

In this work it has been noted that ancient kings claimed to be responsible for the common good in their kingdoms. But from the findings of this work it seems that was not the case. In similar measure the modern state claims to be at the service of the common good. It collects taxes from the citizens so that it provides services to all its citizens. But from the findings of this work, it is clear that the Zimbabwean state in particular and the African state in general have challenges in this regards. The area of the state and the common good is a good area for further research. Is the state at the service of the common good or it is there to serve the interests of the power elite? The Old Testament prophets expected the “state” to serve the interests of all the people especially the poor. But was that the *raison d'être* of the state to begin with? Another area that can make an interesting research is that of the praise singing of the political leaders in both situations. Strong cross-cultural comparisons can be made in the way in which political leaders were viewed by their people. This might have had an effect of pacifying their people preventing them from mobilising and rising up against them.

An issue that this work has not dealt with at all is the gender aspect of these political economies. It would be important to investigate the role of women in, and to what extent women were victims of, these political economies of terror.

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